sought shelter. Only after the relics of the martyr-saint Catherine of Alexandria were brought to the monastery in the eleventh or twelfth century did the monastery take its present name. The earliest references to the monastery of Saint Catherine are found in the fourteenth-century accounts of Latin pilgrims, such as Sir John Mandeville and Niccolò da Poggibonsi, who refer not only to the monastery but also to the church as Saint Catherine's.[6]

In the thirteenth century an identity shift becomes apparent in the monastery's art: the place that was once primarily associated with Moses' encounter with the divine becomes identified with the physical presence of Catherine's relics. This change, which is documented in liturgical sources and pilgrims' accounts, also appears in twelfth- and thirteenth-century Sinai imagery that brings together Moses, Mary, and Catherine, particularly in icons of the Virgin and Catherine. Furthermore, the iconography of Mary herself also changes; a new visual type, the Virgin of the Burning Bush, emerges during the same period that Catherine becomes physically present in the art and ritual of the monastery. A closer study of these icons (see later section, "Origins of the Burning Bush Type") reveals the monastery's attitude toward its holy figures and demonstrates how the community presented them to a culturally diverse audience of pilgrims.

The image of the Virgin wrapped in the flames and tendrils of the Burning Bush appeared for the first time in Sinai icons at the same time that the site was increasingly becoming a major international pilgrimage destination associated with Catherine's cult. The Burning Bush imagery that developed at this time articulated the significance of the Theotokos for the monastery in a new and explicit manner. This image type emerged during the period that there was a demonstrated Western presence at the monastery, as well as in the greater Latin Kingdom of the Holy Land. This allows the intriguing hypothesis that this imagery responded to the monastery's increased contact with a Latin audience. An examination of the convergence of the Virgin of the Burning Bush and Saint Catherine in the monastery's icons may provide a clearer picture of the monastery's internal devotional practices and the external interest in the growing cult of Catherine.

In the sixth century historian Procopius wrote that the new church commissioned at this time was dedicated to "the Holy Theotokos."[7] While churches across the Byzantine Empire were commonly dedicated to the Mother of God, at Sinai the particular association of the Virgin with Moses was well established in exegetical writings. In interpreting the scriptures, the church fathers had linked the theophany of Moses—the moment at which God revealed himself in the form of the Burning Bush—with that of Mary, to whom God appeared in the form of the Incarnation. In the fourth century Bishop Gregory of Nyssa introduced the Burning Bush as a metaphor for the virginity of Mary, who was likened to the bush that burned without being consumed.[8] Through the placement of a church dedicated to the Mother of God at the foot of Mount Sinai, the unifying theme of the entire site in its earliest years was one of theophany—the appearance of God to man. Thus the place where God revealed himself to Moses became associated, through the dedication of the church, with the Virgin.

In its earliest years the identity of the monastery was therefore shaped both by its physical location at Mount Sinai and by exegesis. This conscious association with the holy site continued through the thirteenth century, as seen in the *Typikon* of Abbot Symeon. Dating to 1214, this guide for the liturgical observances of the monastery was based on that of the monastery of Saint Sabas in Jerusalem and modified for use by the monks at Sinai. The text's language makes clear that the defining features of the Sinai community remained their associ-

ation with the Mother of God and with the hallowed ground of Mount Sinai: "*Typikon* after the model of the lavra of our saintly father Sabas, of the monastery of Jerusalem, intended (for) and dedicated to the all-sacred and holy monastery of the supremely holy Theotokos, established on the holy mountain Sinai, wherein is also honoured the great God-seeing prophet Moses."[9]

While reinforcing the primary role of the Theotokos for the monastery, this document also provides the earliest record of the introduction of Saint Catherine into the liturgy at Sinai. The *Typikon* establishes November 24 as the feast day for both the holy martyr Catherine of Alexandria and Saint Merkourios. Nancy Ševčenko has noted that the feast of Saint Catherine, as it is articulated in the *Typikon*, is less elaborate than that of Moses and other Sinaitic saints.[10] The document demonstrates Catherine's presence, if not yet her prominence, in the devotional life of the monastery at this time.

MOSES, MARY, AND THE BURNING BUSH

Moses and the Mother of God figured in the artistic tradition of the monastery from the time of the church's construction. The great Justinianic apse mosaic, one of the few early works of art created specifically for the monastery, depicts the moment that Christ's divinity was revealed to the apostles on Mount Tabor. This monumental work reinforces the theme of theophany already introduced through the placement of the church at the base of Mount Sinai and the dedication of the monastery to the Theotokos. Moses appears not only in the narrative Transfiguration image, standing beside Christ as an embodiment of the Law, but also in the mosaics on the wall above the apse (see fig. 15). On the right, Moses, preparing to set foot on holy ground, removes his sandal before the Burning Bush and, on the left, reaches above to receive the tablets of the Law.[11]

While the Virgin is featured in some of the great early works of the monastery, most notably the stunning sixth-century encaustic icon of the Virgin and Christ Enthroned with Angels (see fig. 46),[12] the earliest image to explicitly link Mary and the site of Moses' encounter with the divine is an Ascension icon dating to the ninth or tenth century (see cat. no. 5). Once the central panel of a triptych, this icon gives physical form to the exegetical interpretation of the Burning Bush as a type for the Virgin. In the lower register, below the rising figure of Christ, the Virgin stands among the group of assembled apostles, both hands raised with palms turned outward in the orant position of prayer (fig. 78). The jeweled footstool on which the Virgin stands separates her from the group and lifts her above the first row of figures at her sides. Directly behind her, the Burning Bush—shown here as a leafy green bush with red flowers—frames the Virgin, setting her apart from the composition much like the mandorla that encases the image of Christ above her.[13]

The presence of the red-flowering bush supports the hypothesis that this object was created specifically for placement in the monastery of the Theotokos at the site of the Burning Bush.[14] The landscape of this image conflates two holy sites and, in fact, two holy mountains. The representation of the mountain behind the figures—painted as a series of red scales—can be immediately understood as the Mount of Olives, traditionally held to be the place from which Christ rose to heaven.[15] At the same time, however, the reference to the Burning Bush and the marked emphasis on the Virgin suggest that this image would have had particular resonance for the inhabitants of the monastery located at the base of Mount Sinai.

Weitzmann and others have pointed to this ninth/tenth-century image as a precursor of the Burning Bush type that appears in the thirteenth-century icons at Sinai, an image type in

Figure 78
Ascension of Christ, ninth/tenth century (detail, cat. no. 5).

which the Virgin appears wrapped in the flames of the bush itself.[16] However, the Ascension icon, separated by several centuries from the later images, links metaphor and site in a manner that does not rely on the iconography of the flames. While the Ascension icon deliberately refers to the Burning Bush, its painter was working within an established artistic idiom.

In composition, the Ascension scene follows the iconography present on Palestinian pilgrim ampullae (fig. 80) or the Syriac Rabbula Gospels (see fig. 101), both from the sixth century, in which the apostles surround the central figure of the Virgin while Christ rises to heaven in a mandorla above. In style, this icon resembles works of the Palestinian school. It may have been produced for the monastery by artists who had come to Sinai from Jerusalem; for example, we know that in the tenth century a community of Georgian monks left the monastery of Saint Sabas near Jerusalem to reside at Sinai. The Sinai Ascension icon deviates slightly from the dynamic Ascension iconography seen in these earlier examples, however. In the Sinai icon nearly all the apostles turn, with gestures and gaze, to the central figure of the Virgin rather than to Christ above. In addition, the footstool on which Mary stands is an element not usually seen in exterior scenes and heightens the emphasis on the Virgin.[17]

The artistic language used to express the connection between the Theotokos and the Burning Bush also resembles that of wall paintings found in Coptic monasteries. The artists of

Figure 79
Apse fresco with the Ascension, sixth to eighth century. Chapel XVII. The Monastery of Saint Apollo, Bawit, Egypt.

an Ascension fresco in Bawit, Egypt, for example, made connections to holy sites in much the same way (fig. 79).[18] Despite certain differences in tone—the Bawit fresco is marked by its static, frontal composition with the apostles facing outward—the composition resembles the Sinai icon in its juxtaposition of the Virgin with flowering trees behind her. The Virgin is framed on either side by two olive trees with white blossoms, referring to the Mount of Olives. The similarity of the foliage and the choice of this background element demonstrate that the artist who created the Ascension icon used a common expressive device found in monasteries in Egypt. The Sinai icon thus constitutes an early attempt to adapt the exegetical metaphor—the bush as a foreshadowing of the Virgin—to the holy landscape of Sinai and does so within the framework of an established artistic tradition.

Figure 80
Pewter ampulla with the Ascension, sixth century. Museum of the Cathedral, Monza, Italy (Amp.1).

In the late-twelfth or thirteenth century, an established Marian image type, known as the Virgin Kyriotissa, gained a new association with the Burning Bush at Sinai. Ten icons from a series each show a venerating saint or patriarch standing next to a Virgin Kyriotissa, an iconographic type that has come to be known as the Virgin of the Burning Bush (fig. 81, and see cat. no. 52). The explicit designation of the standing Virgin Kyriotissa as "of the Bush" was made through an inscription on a later Sinai icon in which the Kyriotissa type was clearly labeled as "Mother of God of the [Burning] Bush" (fig. 82).[19] The icon bearing this inscription shows the Virgin Kyriotissa flanked by four Sinai saints. While the ten series

Figure 81
Isaiah and the Virgin, thirteenth century (detail, fig. 132)

icons were labeled with the traditional inscription ("Mētēr Theou") without explicit reference to the bush, the repetition of this image type on the later icon that does contain this inscription strongly suggests the established association, at the monastery, of the Kyriotissa type with the Burning Bush.

Doula Mouriki proposed that this series refers to a specific Kyriotissa icon placed in the Chapel of the Burning Bush.[20] These icons have been traditionally regarded as works of local production, either created as votive offerings to the monastery by pilgrims or as gifts to high-ranking visitors.[21] As has been noted elsewhere in this volume (see cat. no. 52), the fact that the monastery retained so many of these works—all identical in composition and differing only in the choice of accompanying saint—suggests that they were created for the monastery itself, perhaps for the personal devotion of monks in their cells. Strengthening the hypothesis for Sinai viewership, if there were indeed a primary image at Sinai to which these small icons referred, the monks who used them for personal devotion would have no need for inscriptions identifying their association with the Burning Bush.

Figure 82
Virgin of the Burning Bush and Four Saints, 1230–40. Tempera on panel, 38 × 39.5 × 3 cm (15 × 15½ × 1⅛ in.). The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt.

SAINT CATHERINE IN ART AND RITUAL

The introduction of Saint Catherine, the third great figure for Sinai, into the spiritual life of the monastery remains difficult to pinpoint. Artistic evidence prior to the thirteenth century reveals a certain disjunction between the internal devotional practices of the monastery and the external motives for pilgrimage to the site. If the relics of Catherine did indeed constitute an important draw for pilgrims as early as the twelfth century,[22] her central role at the monastery had not yet manifested itself in the icons. The earliest icon of Catherine at the monastery dates to the eleventh or possibly twelfth century, and several of them date to the thirteenth. In these images, however, Catherine does not achieve the primacy that she enjoys in art of the following centuries.

While legend tells that Saint Catherine's bones were deposited on a nearby mountaintop by angels and later discovered by monks, who brought them to the monastery, we still do not know when the translation of the relics actually occurred. Like the image of the Virgin of the Burning Bush, which grew out of literary metaphor, the cult of Catherine at Sinai appears to have followed on the heels of hagiographic writings.[23] According to the earliest account of the saint's life, by Symeon Metaphrastes and dating to 960–64, Catherine was a princess from Alexandria who refused to renounce Christianity and sacrifice to the Roman gods.[24] Called to defend her faith against the emperor Maxentius's philosophers, she soundly defeated them in

Figure 83 (opposite)
Saints Catherine and Marina, eleventh/twelfth century. Tempera and gold on panel, 28 × 22 cm (11 × 8⅝ in.). The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt. Photo: Bruce White.

Figure 84
Saints Catherine and Marina, thirteenth century. Tempera and metal leaf on panel, 33 × 25 cm (13 × 9⅞ in.). The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt. Photo: Kristen M. Collins.

debate, converting them in the process. Maxentius ordered that the philosophers be put to death on a pyre and that Catherine be executed on a spiked wheel. The wheel burst, miraculously saving her, and the emperor then ordered her beheaded.

The site-specific element of Catherine's story—the placement of her body on a peak near Mount Sinai—is not generally included in narratives of Catherine's life. While present in the Metaphrastian account, this element is absent from other Byzantine liturgical sources. Neither the Menologion of Basil II, written around 1000, nor the earliest Byzantine liturgical record that establishes her feast day reports the removal of her body to Sinai.[25] The frequent inclusion of Catherine in late-tenth-century fresco programs in Cappadocia[26] and in eleventh-century illustrated menologia from Constantinople suggest that from the earliest years, veneration of this saint was widespread rather than site specific.[27]

Modern perceptions of Catherine's status as a major cult figure for the monastery derive in large part from the accounts of Western pilgrims to the Holy Land from the thirteenth through the eighteenth century. Muslims, Melchite Christians, and residents of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem also regarded Sinai as a holy place.[28] The art of the monastery thus reflects not simply the figures associated with or particularly venerated at the site but the mixing of cultures and religious practice that occurred at the foot of this holy mountain.

When the pilgrim Epiphanius traveled to Sinai in 820, he made no mention of Catherine's relics.[29] David Jacoby suggests that the cult was in place at the monastery as early as the 1160s,[30] but it is not until 1217, with the account of the German pilgrim Thietmar that a detailed description emerges of her relics at the monastery and the rituals surrounding them:

> When the bishop of the place understood my desire and the cause of my coming, having prepared with devotion and prayers and singing, he went with lighted candles and thuribles to the sarcophagus of the blessed Katherine the virgin, and opened it and commanded me to look within. And I clearly saw the body of the blessed Katherine face to face without shadow, and I kissed her uncovered head. Her limbs and bones adhering together are floating in oil, since the oil itself sweats forth from each joint of her body, not from the tomb; just as from a human body in a bath, sweat breaks forth from the pores in drops.[31]

In the earliest representations at the monastery, Catherine appears in several instances on small icons in the company of other standing saints. A compact icon of Saints Catherine and Marina shows Catherine garbed in Byzantine imperial garments and standing next to maphorion-clad Marina (fig. 83).[32] Her jeweled crown with *prependoulia* and the *thorakion*, a shieldlike element of the *loros* (sash) worn by Byzantine empresses, had become standard attributes for Catherine as early as the eleventh century elsewhere in the Byzantine Empire. This object may have been created specifically for the monastery. Their pairing may have been inspired by the combination of like types: female martyr-saints killed for their refusal to renounce Christianity.[33] While the monastery is not known to have possessed relics of Marina, one of the side chapels in the church was dedicated to her. This grouping could indicate Catherine's own rising status at the site.

A thirteenth-century icon of the same figures (fig. 84) demonstrates the popularity of Marina and Catherine as a pair in the art of the monastery and supports the idea that their association came about as a response to the particular significance of these saints for Sinai. This icon, whose figures were erroneously reinscribed at a later date as Saint Euphemia and Saint Marina, shows the two saints standing side by side.[34] Oddities of Catherine's iconography here

have been attributed to a Western artist's unfamiliarity with Byzantine imagery; she holds an orb inscribed with a cross, a symbol appropriate only for a reigning Byzantine empress, and wears the *loros*, hanging straight down in the manner usually reserved for representations of a male ruler.[35] The orb does in fact appear in other Byzantine images of the saint, however, and the simple *loros* (seen also in the small images of Catherine framing the thirteenth-century vita icon) could as easily have resulted from the work's status as a local production.[36] The small size of the icon made it appropriate for private veneration, perhaps in a chapel, while repetition of this pair by a local artist once again highlights the ways in which artists working at Sinai adapted standard iconography to communicate the importance of these saints for a varied audience.

In the thirteenth century the great vita icon of Saint Catherine was created for the monastery (cat. no. 55). Weitzmann suggests that this large panel with its central image of the saint surrounded by smaller scenes of her life and martyrdom may have been placed in proximity to the sarcophagus that contained her relics.[37] While the location of icons during the Middle Ages is not known and cannot be known because this is a portable medium, the large scale of this work does indeed suggest public rather than private devotional use. Furthermore, the iconographic elements that link this representation of Catherine to those of Georgian queens demonstrates how Sinai icon painting in the thirteenth century responded to both cult practice and international audience.[38]

Nancy Ševčenko has suggested that the vita icon could have been created as a response to the influx of Christian pilgrims to the monastery during this period.[39] The growing scholarship on the veneration of Saint Catherine demonstrates that her cult spread well beyond Sinai and may have even had an earlier foothold in the West.[40] The creation of this vita icon, the most comprehensive hagiographic treatment of Catherine in Byzantine art, came not only when Latin pilgrims were coming to the site but also when the monastery was sending its own envoys westward.

The same Abbot Symeon responsible for the typikon in which Catherine's feast appears had traveled to Venice and Rome in 1211 to petition authorities for protection against Latin encroachments on the monastery's properties in the Mediterranean, particularly Crete, following the Venetian occupation in 1206.[41] The monastery, while geographically isolated, nevertheless relied heavily on its dependencies in the Mediterranean for revenue and supplies.[42] Under Symeon, the monastery had been awarded properties on Crete in 1203. The abbot's efforts to secure confirmation of properties from the doge and the promise of future protections from the pope were successful. In the bulla granting certain protections to the monastery, Pope Honorius continued to refer to it as "the monastery of Saint Mary."[43] Yet despite this association, pilgrims' accounts from this time document the growing role of Catherine in the life of the monastery, not only on her feast day but also through the ritualistic display of her relics that Thietmar described. A dual identity begins to form in the art at the monastery at this time—one reflecting the internal devotional practices and associations with theophany, the other with the martyr-saint who had a growing constituency in Italy and regions farther west.

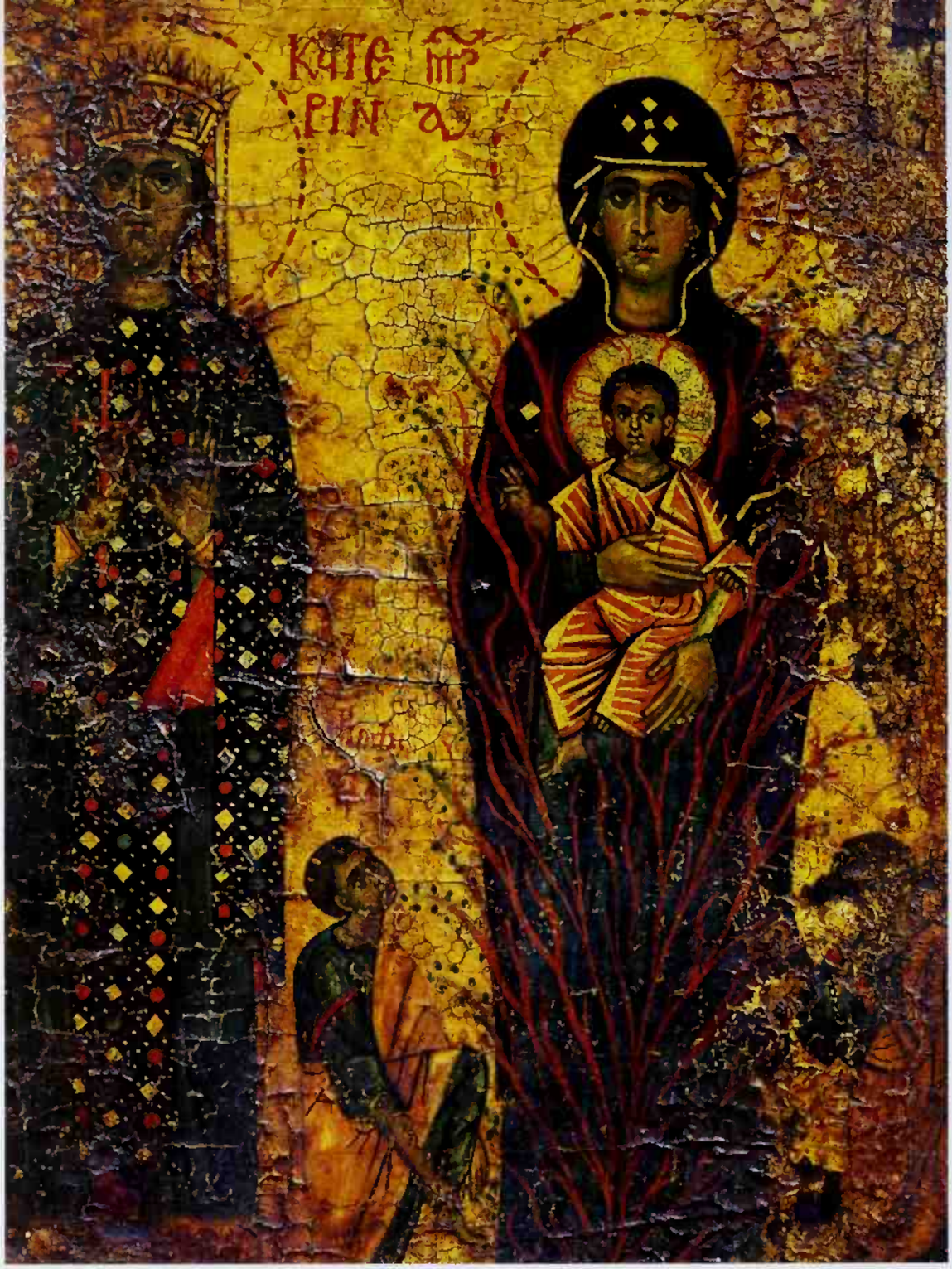


Figure 85
Saint Catherine with the Virgin of the Burning Bush, thirteenth century (detail, cat. no. 56)

LOCA SANCTA ICONS

The greatest number of icons with site-specific, or "Sinaitic," imagery appear in the thirteenth century. The Catherine vita icon dates to this period, as do the paired icons of Moses before the Burning Bush and Moses Receiving the Law (cat. no. 51, fig. 130) and a lesser-known but important icon that unites Moses, Mary, and Catherine in one work (fig. 85, and see cat. no. 56).[44] This icon represents a Virgin Kyriotissa accompanied by Saint Catherine, who wears imperial robes. On either side of the Virgin, who holds the Christ child in the flaming branches of the bush, stand two smaller images of Moses. The placement of Catherine and the Virgin side by side bridges the divide between the physical relics of Catherine, the focus of Latin pilgrims' accounts, and the emphasis on Moses and Mary as witnesses of the divine, seen in the earlier art and architecture of the site. This icon bears a certain iconographic similarity to the mosaic described by Father Niccolò in the fourteenth century and provides evidence for an even earlier, deliberate combination of the three great holy figures associated with this site in the visual arts at Sinai.

Figure 86
Virgin Kykkotissa, right wing of a diptych, last quarter of the thirteenth century. Tempera and gold on panel, 50.5 × 39.9 cm (19⅞ × 15¾ in.). Note the Virgin of the Burning Bush at top of frame. The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt.

Figure 87
Virgin Kykkotissa, (detail, fig. 86), top of frame, showing Virgin of the Burning Bush.

This is the earliest example in which the association of the Kyriotissa with the Burning Bush was made through images rather than through inscription or placement within holy space. The Kyriotissa figure is almost identical to that seen in a series of thirteenth-century icons that include the exhibited panel of Moses with the Virgin and Child (cat. no. 52). Even the gold hatching, known as *chrysography*, that defines the folds of Christ's robe is identical to that of earlier icons. The most striking feature of the composition, however, is the iconography of winding flames and green branches of the Burning Bush that twine around the Theotokos. The Virgin Kyriotissa wrapped in the flames of the bush constitutes a novel and expressive mode designed to make the Virgin's metaphoric and site-specific association with the Burning Bush clear to even those viewers not versed in Orthodox theology and those who had not had access to the Chapel of the Burning Bush.

This icon, like the image that Niccolò describes, brings together the three great holy figures of the monastery. The work may have been commissioned by a Latin pilgrim. In addition to the graphic flame imagery, the small size of the figure of Moses is odd, usually reserved for a donor figure, not a prophet. The development of this imagery more likely reflected an attempt on the part of local artists to create an iconography that would clearly communicate key elements of Eastern exegesis, asserting the role of the Mētēr Theou Vatou at the monastery even as Catherine became a major cult figure for Latin pilgrims.

The diptych of Saint Procopius and the Virgin Kykkotissa with saints and prophets is usually cited as the earliest work to display the imagery of the Virgin fully immersed in the Burning Bush (fig. 86). A small bust portrait of an orant Virgin surrounded by the Burning Bush appears on the frame of the Virgin Kykkotissa panel (fig. 87), which is likely the work of a Venetian or perhaps Crusader artist.[45] The inclusion of an image that links metaphor and site in so explicit a manner supports the idea that this newly specific imagery was influenced by Western viewers or patrons in the Holy Land. Mary is shown between her parents, Joachim

Figure 88
Moses Removing His Sandals and Moses before the Virgin of the Burning Bush, end of the twelfth century. Tempera on panel, 72.5 × 39.5 cm (28½ × 15½ in.). The Greek Orthodox Patriarchate, Jerusalem, Israel.

and Anna, a reference to her purity and a juxtaposition that emphasizes the exegetical context of this innovative imagery.

Earlier than either the Procopius diptych or the icon of Catherine and the Virgin of the Burning Bush (cat. no. 56) is a late-twelfth-century icon in the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate in Jerusalem (fig. 88). It joins the Annunciation scene to the scenes of Moses removing his sandal and reaching upward to shield his eyes from the divinity.[46] The Virgin sits at the center of the flaming bush, one hand raised in acceptance, as an angel approaches her from above. With the other hand she holds a spindle, a common iconographic device in Byzantine Annunciation scenes. The Christ child is visible as a ghostly bust portrait in a medallion on her chest. Moses appears twice, bending to remove his sandal and gesturing with raised hands before the bush. The icon has been associated with Sinai production on the basis of its site-specific imagery.[47] In two of the last three icons, the Virgin in flames refers explicitly to her virginity. The Procopius diptych depicts figures that reinforce the sinless conception of Jesus, and the Jerusalem icon combines the Annunciation and Moses before the Burning Bush.

The Ascension icon and the later image of the Virgin of the Burning Bush on the Procopius diptych fit into the broader category of *locus sanctus* (sacred place) icons for Sinai. Kurt Weitzmann introduced this category as a way to discuss works that featured holy figures or scenes while incorporating iconographic elements specific to a given site; these objects were thought to have functioned as votives or souvenirs for visitors to the site. Weitzmann's concept of the *locus sanctus* icon has been used to discuss those Sinai works displaying site-specific elements, such as the Burning Bush or, beginning in the thirteenth century, images of Catherine. Weitzmann rightly identified the danger in trying to identify a unifying style among the various pilgrimage centers of the Holy Land and the artistic production associated with these sites, but this general term can, in some cases, mask important differences in the artists' approach to the material.

In the case of the Sinai icons, the term *Vátou* was applied equally to the series of ten icons in which the Mother of God is understood to be "Vatou" (of the bush)[48] (cat. no. 52) and later works, such as the thirteenth-century Procopius diptych image, which Weitzmann noted for the "naturalistic" detail of its flames.[49] Grouping such diverse works as Virgin Kyriotissa series and the Procopius diptych image solely for their reference to the Burning Bush, however, overlooks their distinct expressive vocabularies and possible contexts—such as differing audience and patron groups.

By the twelfth century the Burning Bush, attested in exegesis and hymnology, appeared frequently in the art of Byzantium and Christian Egypt as one of the symbols of the Virgin. An early-twelfth-century icon at the monastery, probably created in Constantinople, shows the Virgin Kykkotissa surrounded by smaller images of Christ in glory, prophets, and saints (fig. 89).[50] Through the selection of prophets and the texts they display, the icon presents a complex theological statement about redemption through the Incarnation. For example, Moses before the Burning Bush bears a scroll inscribed, "I will now turn aside and see this great sight" (EXOD. 3:3). Two registers below him the prophet Ezekiel stands before a closed gate, another symbol of Mary's virginity, and holds a scroll with the words, "And the Lord said unto me; this gate shall be shut" (EZEK. 44:2).

A twelfth-century Coptic fresco in the Monastery of the Syrians at Scetis (Wadi al-Natrun) similarly associates the Annunciation scene with the prophets Isaiah, Moses, Ezekiel and Daniel.[51] Each prophet holds a scroll foretelling Mary's virginity (fig. 90). Moses' inscription reads, "I saw the bush burnt with fire, and it was not consumed," while Ezekiel's text again refers to the closed gate that may not be opened. As Lucy-Anne Hunt noted, these prophecies were read in the Orthodox Church for the Feast of the Annunciation.[52] While this image was tailored for the needs of a Coptic monastery, its shared imagery of the prophets Moses, Isaiah, Daniel, and Ezekiel—seen in the Byzantine Kykkotissa icon at Sinai—displays an awareness of Byzantine hymnography and of Byzantine art in the service of Orthodox theology.[53]

Figure 89 (left)
Virgin Kykkotissa Surrounded by Christ in Glory, Prophets, and Saints, first half of twelfth century. Tempera and gold on panel, 48.5 × 41.2 cm (19⅛ × 16¾ in.). The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt.

Figure 90 (below)
Annunciation fresco in the western semidome of the church of the Virgin, twelfth century. Dayr al-Suryan (Monastery of the Syrians), Wadi al-Natrun, Egypt.

ORIGINS OF THE BURNING BUSH TYPE

Contrary to the prevailing assumption that the type of Virgin shown within the flaming bush must have originated in Byzantium, the earliest examples of the Virgin fully immersed in the flaming bush originated in the Holy Land during the time of the Latin occupation.[54] The only earlier Burning Bush images to visualize the Marian metaphor are found in two Byzantine manuscripts, the illustrated homilies on the life of the Virgin by the monk James.[55] Probably illuminated in the second quarter of the twelfth century in Constantinople, these manuscripts depict Moses twice, commanded by an angel above. First, as in the later Sinai icons, he removes his sandal before the Burning Bush and then holds the staff that turns into a serpent. In this instance, the bush contains an image of the cross-nimbed Christ Emmanuel, not the Virgin, a composition repeated in the second homily on the Nativity of the Virgin in the Vatican manuscript (fig. 91). The Constantinopolitan tradition thus differs from the icons at the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate and Saint Catherine's.

The Virgin in the illuminations for James's *Homilies* is represented not within the Burning Bush but as the bush itself. Moses approaches a flaming bush containing a medallion portrait of Christ Emmanuel. The Virgin is not pictured because the entire bush here is understood as a metaphor for Mary. This image reflects the shift that occurred between early exegetical writings and hymnography: Among exegetes such as Gregory of Nyssa, the Burning Bush referred initially to Mary's virginity.[56] As Tzvetkova-Ivanova has demonstrated, when this metaphor passed into hymnology the meaning expanded, so that by the fifth century, with the writings of Proclus, the Burning Bush could be understood as a more comprehensive symbol for Mary."[57]

The textual context of the Vatican image emphasizes the overall person of Mary; the fact that it does not accompany the homily on the Annunciation removes it from the specific link between the Burning Bush and Mary's virginity. For the Byzantine viewer, who would have been familiar with the texts and hymns that established the bush as a symbol for Mary, an image of Moses standing before a burning bush that enclosed an image of Christ would have communicated this concept in a clear visual shorthand.

In the twelfth-century Burning Bush–Annunciation icon now in Jerusalem (see fig. 88), however, the iconography is so specific that the intended viewer was not required to bring knowledge of Eastern hymnology to these images. The specificity of this image suggests outsider (Latin) viewership. The traditional iconography of the Annunciation—spindle, seated Virgin, and ghostly image of Christ in the medallion—are combined with the representation of Moses and Burning Bush to augment any gap in the viewer's understanding of the exegetical link between the Virgin and the Burning Bush.

This association is reinforced in the thirteenth-century Procopius diptych, a Crusader work created for the monastery. Here the Virgin in the Burning Bush appears between her parents, Joachim and Anna, in an allusion to her own sinless conception. In both examples, the addition of iconography relating to Mary's purity allows the Virgin in the flames to be understood even by those viewers not steeped in Eastern exegesis, as the bush that burned and was not consumed.

Such a programmatic approach to the representation of Burning Bush exegesis can also be seen in one of the great thirteenth-century monuments of the West. In portal sculpture on the north porch of Chartres, Mary stands over a socle clearly depicting the flames and foliage of the Burning Bush (fig. 92).[58] Part of a Visitation scene, she turns to Elizabeth and reveals that she will bear the son of God (LUKE 1:39).

Figure 91 (below)
Moses before the Burning Bush, Vat. Gr. 1162, fol. 54v. Vatican Library, Rome, Italy.

Figure 92 (right)
The Visitation, ca. 1225. North porch, Chartres Cathedral, France.

We cannot know the conditions under which the Jerusalem Burning Bush icon (fig. 88) was created, whether as a work for the monastery at Sinai or its dependency in Acre, or perhaps even as a souvenir for a pilgrim who had visited the monastery. This work's blended imagery does suggest, however, that the new Burning Bush type was forged as a means of giving form to one of the great holy figures for Sinai in a manner that would be easily accessible. As in the combined image at Chartres, the narrative cues would have underscored the exegetical meaning of the Burning Bush.

Figure 93
Moses before the Burning Bush and *Aaron and Moses before Pharoah*, first quarter of thirteenth century English psalter (Codex Monacensis Lat. 835), fol 18r. Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Munich, Germany.

Figure 94
Stained-glass window with Moses before the Burning Bush, first quarter of the thirteenth century. East wall, clerestory. Chartres Cathedral, Chartres, France.

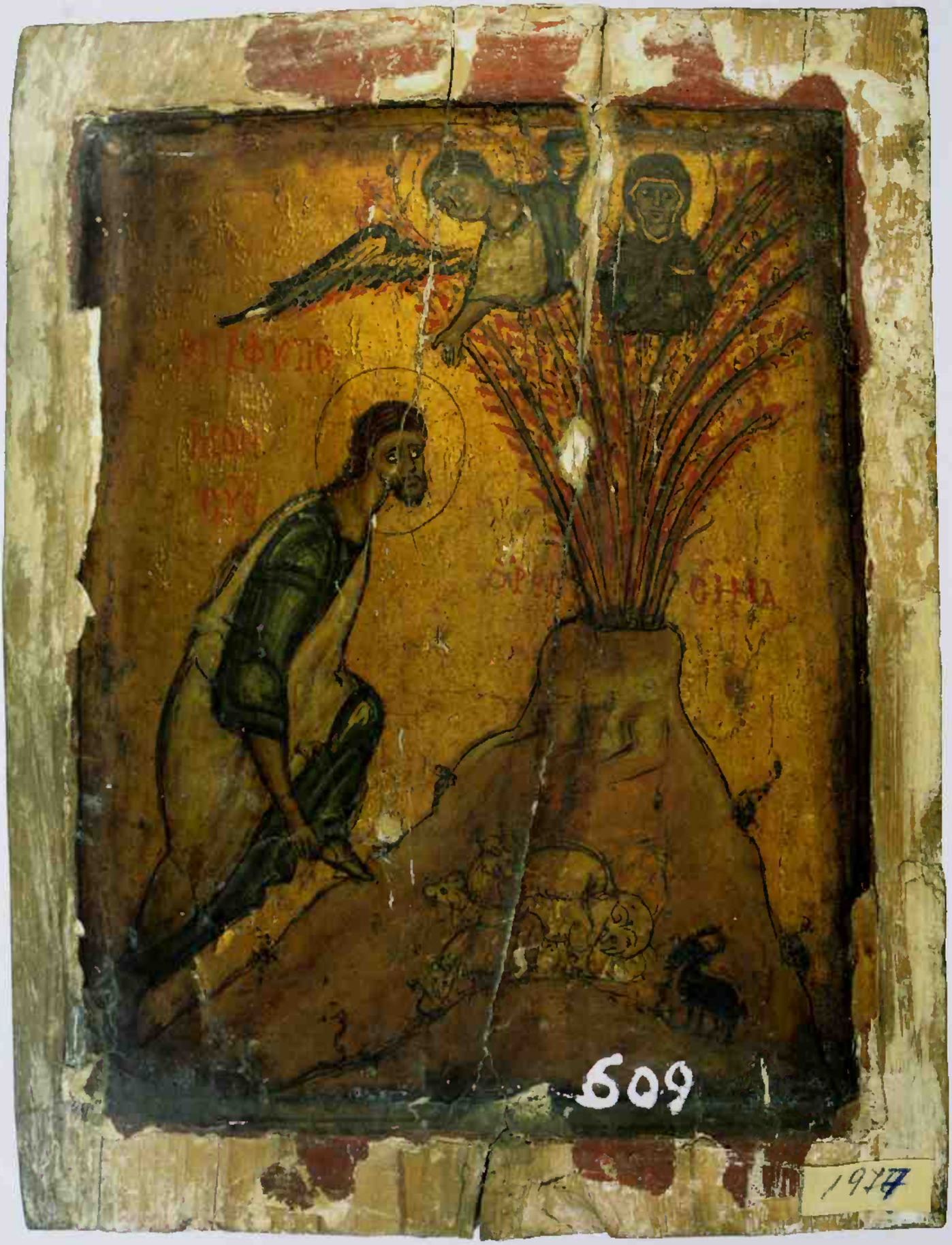
In addition to the Procopius diptych, at least one other example suggests the appeal of Burning Bush imagery for the Latin faithful in the Holy Land. A twelfth-century fresco in the church of Mart Barbara, Tripoli (Lebanon) showed the Virgin Orans with Christ in a medallion, inscribed *IC XC Emmanuel*.[59] The image, formerly in the apse of the church, showed the Virgin flanked by two angels and two clusters of flames. While this does not provide an example of the inhabited bush iconography seen in the Sinai icons, it suggests a wider diffusion of Burning Bush imagery in the art of the Holy Land than has previously been considered. An awareness of Sinai as one of the great sites of the Holy Land probably contributed to the creation of this image.

The inhabited Burning Bush imagery seen in the Jerusalem icon and the monastery's icon of Catherine and the Virgin of the Burning Bush—with the Virgin wrapped in branches and flames to her shoulders—has analogies in contemporary Burning Bush imagery in the West. In the Western examples however, the bush contains an image of the mature Christ, rather than the Virgin or the young Christ Emmanuel. In these images a half-length figure of the bearded Christ emerges from the top of the bush and, through gesture and gaze, engages in dialogue with Moses. This active engagement creates a narrative element lacking in the Byzantine examples. As seen in a thirteenth-century English psalter, Moses bends to remove his shoes while a bust figure of Christ, his shoulders and face visible above the articulated flames of the bush, turns to the prophet (fig. 93).[60] This type also appears in an early-thirteenth-century window at Chartres (fig. 94).[61] Despite a variation in the representation of the bush, which here blossoms from an elongated trunk, the half-length figure of Christ rising above the flames demonstrates the use of the "immersion" iconography for the depictions of the bush in Western art.

Between the twelfth and thirteenth centuries a change occurred in the manner in which the long-established connection between the Virgin and the Burning Bush was expressed through the art at Sinai. The imagery of the thirteenth-century, Kyriotissa-series icons and the Virgin of the Burning Bush on the frame of the Procopius diptych constitute distinct modes of expression that can be attributed in this specific case to different patron groups—the Kyriotissa-series icons were likely created at the monastery, while the Procopius diptych has Western associations.[62] Other early examples of the Burning Bush type cannot be so easily classified however. In the case of the Burning Bush–Annunciation icon now in Jerusalem and the thirteenth-century image of Catherine and the Virgin of the Burning Bush with Moses (cat. no. 56), there is no evidence that points to Latin patronage.

The thirteenth century is often discussed as the period that gave rise to the most site-specific "Sinaitic" iconography; however, the categorization of Sinaitic, or *loca sancta,* icons does little to advance an understanding of function and audience. While future scientific study may reveal more information about the materials and places of origin of these works, it is not possible at this time to determine a patron or artist group with any degree of certainty. Knowing the cultural and devotional exchange that occurred at Sinai, however, we can at least examine the ways in which the artists who made these works chose to express the sacred nature of this site. Particularly in the images of the Virgin of the Burning Bush, we can see the existence of two distinct modes of expression that may reflect the varied expectations of the inhabitants of and visitors to the site.

At Sinai the association of the Virgin with the Burning Bush manifested itself in icons in which the Virgin was designated as the Vatos through inscription even while a new expressive device—the image of the Virgin shown fully engulfed in the flames of the bush—came into use. Through this we may view these icons not simply as a record of those particular figures venerated at the site but as objects that can provide a clearer understanding of the way in which the monastery adapted to address the expectations of its diverse audience. At same time Catherine became a tangible and, through the regular display of her relics, a highly visible presence at the monastery. The Mētēr Theou Vatou, formerly a concept communicated through inscription, was developed into a new visual type accessible to all.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CODA

At the monastery, the imagery of Theotokos the Vatos continued into the fourteenth century; two examples that remain there include an icon of a bearded Moses before the Virgin of the Burning Bush (fig. 95) and a similar image on the left wing of a triptych showing the twelve Great Feasts, or Dodekaorton, with Sinaitic saints, including Saint Catherine (figs. 96, 97). Probably produced at the monastery,[63] both examples demonstrate the persistence of this type during the period in which Latin pilgrimage to the site continued to grow, even after the Crusaders were expelled from the Holy Land in 1291. A fifteenth-century fresco of

Figure 95 (opposite)
Moses before the Burning Bush, fourteenth to fifteenth century. Tempera on panel, 22.9 × 17.8 cm (9 × 7 in.). The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt. Photo: Father Justin Sinaites.

Figure 96 (above)
Triptych with Dodekaorton (Twelve Feasts), Saints, and the Virgin of the Burning Bush, end of fourteenth or beginning of fifteenth century. Tempera on panel, 35 × 61 cm (13¾ × 24 in.). The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt. Photo: Father Justin Sinaites

Figure 97 (left)
Triptych with Dodekaorton (detail, fig. 96), top of left panel, showing Virgin in the Burning Bush.

the Virgin of the Burning Bush in the Chapel of Saint James displays yet another variation of this type (fig. 98).[64] It is also in the Palaeologan period that we find the earliest evidence for the export of this imagery into the visual culture of Byzantium proper. The church of Saint Nicholas Orphanos in Thessaloniki contains a fourteenth-century fresco of Moses before the Theotokos Vatos that resembles the composition of the twelfth-century icon in Jerusalem; Moses appears twice, below and beside a figure of the seated Virgin, who is enveloped in the flames of the bush.[65]

After the thirteenth century, when the identity of the monastery was well established, artists of the East and the West created varying images of the monastery's venerated patrons, from an International Gothic Catherine as Latin princess (cat. no. 57) to post-Byzantine images of Catherine as Byzantine empress and philosopher. The monastery possesses several images of Theotokos the Vatos as it was developed on Crete. In this type, the Virgin appears on a mountain peak at the center of a stylized mandorla-like bush; in addition to the two traditional images of Moses before the bush, a third scene shows the prophet receiving the tablets of the law. The seventeenth-century icon by the Cretan artist Jeremiah Palladas on the iconostasis at Sinai demonstrates both of these types: Catherine sits in the foreground, garbed as an empress with symbols of her knowledge and martyrdom, while the Virgin of the Burning Bush appears in the background to the left (see fig. 77). It was thus in ateliers far from the monastery that images of the holy figures of Sinai developed into standardized types. In the process, the idiosyncratic experiments of local patrons and artists disappeared, and artists who had never visited the God-trodden monastery now gave it visual form.

Figure 98 (opposite)
Virgin of the Burning Bush, fifteenth century. Fresco. Chapel of Saint James, main church. The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt.

NOTES

1. Bellorini and Hoade 1945, p. 106.
2. Bellorini and Hoade 1945, on his probable itinerary, pp. viii–ix.
3. Bellorini and Hoade 1945, p. 106. While no trace of the mosaic remains today, Father Niccolò's descriptions of certain icons he observed in the church and surrounding chapels resonate with works that remain there today. This suggests that such an arrangement must have been in place in some form at this time. Drandaki speculates that the images described by Niccolò consisted of a collection of panels, one of which could have been the thirteenth-century Virgin Hodegetria mosaic. See Drandaki 2004, p. 38.
4. Procopius (in *Buildings* 5.8) wrote that the church was dedicated to the Mother of God. Dewing 1954–62, vol. 7, p. 356.
5. Gingras 1970, p. 58.
6. Beginning in the sixteenth century pilgrims' accounts identify the Church of the Transfiguration, in response to its great apse mosaic. For more on the Latin pilgrims' response to the monastery, see Braun 1973.
7. Procopius (sixth century). Dewing 1954–62, p. 357.
8. Malherbe and Ferguson 1978, p. 59: "The light of divinity which through birth shone from her into human life did not consume the burning bush, even as the flower of her virginity was not withered by giving birth." For more on the metaphorical associations see Tzvetkova-Ivanova 2000, p. 28.
9. Sinai cod. 1097, transcribed in Dmitrievskij 1895–1917, and translated in N. P. Ševčenko 2004, pp. 274–86. Elsewhere in the Byzantine Empire, the feast day for Saint Catherine was given as either November 24 or 25 from the tenth century on. Mateos 1962, vol. 1, pp. 112, 114.
10. N. P. Ševčenko 2004, pp. 274–86.
11. See fig. 15, herein. These paired scenes appear repeatedly in the art at Sinai, the earliest example can be seen engraved on the arms of a sixth-century bronze cross, probably made in Syria or Palestine for the monastery (see cat. no. 35).
12. See Thomas F. Mathews, "Early Icons of the Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine at Sinai," herein.
13. Although a later thirteenth-century icon with a small image of the orant Virgin within a flaming bush is often referred to as the earliest of this image type, this tenth-century work is usually mentioned as a possible precursor; see Weitzmann 1976. Weitzmann wrote that the unusual feature of the red-flowering bush likely constituted an attempt by the artist to associate this plant with the Burning Bush of Mount Sinai. Doula Mouriki reiterated this assessment in Mouriki 1988.
14. Galavaris 1990, p. 96.
15. Galavaris (1990, p. 96) writes that this relates to the liturgy of the Ascension (studied by Nichola Gioles).
16. Weitzmann 1976, pp. 70–71, and fig. 842. Mouriki 1988, p. 337 n. 28 (repeating Weitzmann); Galavaris 1990.
17. Weitzmann 1976, p. 70.
18. See Clédat 1904, pls. 11–44 (chapel 17). See also Weitzmann 1974, fig. 31.
19. Mouriki 1988, pp. 337–38.
20. Mouriki 1988, p. 338.
21. Weitzmann 1974, p. 53; Mouriki 1988, p. 338; Mouriki 1990, p. 113.
22. See David Jacoby, "Christian Pilgrimage to Sinai until the Late Fifteenth Century," herein, pp. 86–87.
23. N. P. Ševčenko forthcoming; N. P. Ševčenko 2006. I would like to thank Nancy Ševčenko for generously making her forthcoming work available to me.
24. *PG*, vol. 116, cols. 275–302.
25. *PG*, vol. 116, cols. 275–301, esp. 301B. The Menologion of Basil II (Vat. gr. 1613), *PG*, vol. 116, col. 207.
26. Restle 1969, vol. 2. See, for example, Goreme, chapel 9, pl. 129.
27. For the inclusion of Catherine in Metaphrastian menologia, see, for example, Paris BN gr. 580 and 1499, and Copenhagen, *Det Kongelige Bibliotek Gamle Kongelige Sammlung*, fol. 167. N. P. Ševčenko 1990. In N. P. Ševčenko forthcoming, the author discusses Saint Catherine's standing as an "unmoored" saint lacking a dedicated cult site and offers as further evidence of this the lack of church dedications to Catherine in the Byzantine East.
28. See cat. nos. 28, 29, and 51 for Sinai icons as examples of Arab Christian contact with the monastery. While the most of the pilgrims were indeed Christian, the cult held a certain power for Muslim visitors to the site as well. Ludolf of Suchem wrote on the display of Catherine's relics "[A]t these times the Saracen guides and camel-drivers and grooms who come with the pilgrims earnestly beg that they, too, may be allowed to see these holy and wondrous bones, and kneel with the greatest devotion by the side of the Christians" (Stewart 1896, p. 86).
29. Dubois 1988, p. 91.
30. See Jacoby, herein, p. 87.
31. Laurent 1857, p. 43; translation from Latin: Braun 1973, p. 34.
32. G. Soteriou and M. G. Soteriou 1956–58, vol. 1, fig. 50; vol. 2, p. 68.
33. Her representation with Marina of Antioch, another important saint for Byzantium, cannot have been inspired by their proximity on the church calendar, as their feast days fell months apart.
34. G. Sotiriou and M. G. Sotiriou 1956–58, vol. 1, fig. 183; Weitzmann 1966b, fig. 50.
35. Weitzmann 1966b, p. 57.
36. Catherine holds the orb in the early-eleventh-century mosaics at Hosios Loukas; see N. Chatzidakis 1994; N. P. Ševčenko 2006; and thirteenth-century Byzantine wall paintings at Saint Nicholas in Corinth. See Aspra-Vardavakis 1986–87, pp. 123–24.
37. Weitzmann 1984b, p. 95.
38. Weitzmann 1984b points out that all vita icons at the monastery can be connected with chapels under the monastery's supervision or, in Catherine's case, one of the primary figures of veneration. For more on a possible relationship to Georgian ruler images, see cat. no. 55 and Nancy P. Ševčenko in New York 2004, pp. 342–43. Ševčenko writes that the detached *theotokion* with the double-barred cross can be seen in contemporary Georgian monuments.
39. Ševčenko 2006.
40. Catherine Guyon (2002, p. 38) points out that the earliest liturgical references to Catherine's feast day are found in Western manuscripts: a tenth-century calendar from Monte Cassino gives her feast as November 25, while the Sacramentary of Mont Saint Michel (B. M. Rouen, Ms. sup 116) lists the *missa de sancta Katerina*, p. 38. For the cult in the West, see Fawtier 1923; Jones 1976; Lewis 1999; Jenkins and Lewis 2003.
41. N. P. Ševčenko 2006.
42. Coureas 1996. The 1212 letter from the Venetian doge, Pietro Ziani, confirmed the monks' right to the duty-free export of "cheeses, cassocks, incense, olive oil and whatever might derive from the aforementioned estates," p. 477. See also Grigoriadis 1875, pp. 91–92.
43. Hofmann 1927, p. 226.
44. Weitzmann 1974, p. 54, fig. 51. When Weitzmann first published this work he described it as an image of Saint Catherine and the Virgin with one image of Moses standing between the two. This may be in part due to its condition; the surface, though now stable, has lifted in large flakes, and the figure of Catherine is partially obscured by varnish. The fact that he neglected to mention the second figure standing to the right of the Virgin may indicate that the work has undergone cleaning since.
45. For the Procopius diptych, see Mouriki 1990, pp. 118–19, pl. 65; and Jaroslav Folda in New York 2004, pp. 355–56, no. 214.
46. Huber 1980, pp. 184–88, pl. 146; and Boespflug 1992, p. 12, fig. 1.
47. Mouriki 1990, p. 103.
48. Mouriki (1990, p. 109, and 1988, p. 346) accepts the Sotirious dating (G. Sotiriou and M. G. Sotiriou 1956–58, vol. 1, fig. 163, and vol. 2, p. 143) and assigns the series to the thirteenth century, while Weitzmann 1974, p. 53, suggests a late-twelfth/early-thirteenth-century date.
49. Weitzmann 1974, p. 53.
50. Mouriki (1990, pp. 105, 115, fig. 19) suggests that on the basis of the work's technical and theological sophistication it was created in Constantinople.
51. Hunt 1995.
52. Hunt 1995, pp. 196–200.
53. Hunt discusses the incense imagery as even more specifically referring to the Coptic liturgy of the Catechumens, the common confession.
54. Weitzmann 1976, p. 71. Weitzmann wrote that the association of the Virgin with the Burning Bush on the ninth/tenth century icon was analogous to later images such as that on the Procopius diptych. M. Aspra-Vardavakis also comments on the first appearance of the full-immersion imagery in Aspra-Vardavakis 2002, pp. 94–95. Weitzmann further suggests that despite its earliest appearance on this thirteenth-century Crusader icon, this image type must have originated in the East several centuries earlier. Weitzmann 1966b, p. 67 and fig. 35.
55. Vat. Gr. 1162, fol. 54v, and Paris gr. 1208, fol. 73v. Stornajolo 1910. See also Bréhier 1920. An additional Byzantine example, no longer extant, could be found in the Smirna Physiologus. See Bernabò 1998, pl. 81. The illumination juxtaposed a scene of Moses before the bush with a Hodegetria icon, once again demonstrating the implicit association of the Virgin with the Burning Bush in Byzantine representations.
56. Gregory writes in the Life of Moses, "From this we learn also the mystery of the Virgin: The light of divinity which through birth shone from her into human life did not consume the burning bush, even as the flower of her virgin-

ity was not withered by giving birth." Malherbe and Ferguson 1978, p. 59.

57. Tzvetkova-Ivanova 2000, p. 13.
58. Circa 1220 Chartres north porch, left portal, right embrasure; Kidson 1958.
59. Dodd 2004, p. 218, and index, fig. 71; pls. 7.1–7.6, color pl. 34. From the Church of Mart Barbara in Barghoun, Lebanon. This fresco was destroyed sometime after 1997.
60. Bayerisches Staatsbibliothek Codex Monacensis Lat. 835, fol. 18 (first quarter of the thirteenth century); Rickert 1954, p. 112.
61. Delaporte 1926, pp. 5–18.
62. Mouriki 1990, p. 118. Mouriki suggests that this icon may have been painted by a Venetian artist working in Jerusalem.
63. Weitzman 1974, pl. 50, p. 53; G. Sotiriou and M. G. Sotiriou 1956–58, vol. 1, fig. 220, and vol. 2, pp. 193–94. A partially effaced inscription on the back appears to bear the name of the painter, Kimon (KHMON), as well as the incomplete name of a steward, [ANA]CTACI[OC], which the Soterious transcribed as "Anastasios." I am grateful to Father Justin Sinaites for his photograph of this icon.
64. In Paliouras 1990, p. 70; see also p. 383 n. 2. Compare M. Chatzidakis 1970–72 on conch mural in chapel of Saint James. The artists who created this image restricted the flames of the bush to the red maphorion worn by the Virgin Playtera, who stands flanked by Saints John Climacus and Basil to the right and Saint John Chrysostom and Moses to the left. Located next to one of the entrances to the Chapel of the Burning Bush, this chapel was also the site, in recent years, that displayed the Cretan triptych of Theotokos the Vatos with Catherine laid to rest by angels (see cat. no. 58).
65. Kirchainer 2001, p. 212, fig. 71.

HOLY IMAGE

[Icons] of my Supremely good Christ and the Mother of God and Kosmosoteira are respectively represented with great skill, so that the images appear alive to the beholder, and as though letting out a beautiful sound from their mouths toward him.

RULE OF THE MONASTERY OF KOSMOSOTEIRA, 1152[1]

When you look at an icon, the icon looks back. The frontal face, large eyes, symmetrical design, and brilliant gold ground command your attention. Icons also talk back. Gestures, glances, and especially inscriptions allow the holy person to address the faithful, who pray to and through the icon. Icons are doors, gates, windows, but not in the Renaissance sense of a painting as a window into another world. The saint depicted is on, or in front of, the picture plane. Icons are thus places where the divine enters the space of the beholder.

In Greek, the word *icon* means image; holy icons are not confined to a particular artistic medium or material. Individual icons are not original to themselves; they replicate a set of traditional types that are illustrated on the following pages.

Constant companions of men and women in the Middle Ages, the icons in this exhibition remain to this day a vital part of the spiritual and aesthetic treasury that is the Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine at Sinai.

Figure 99 (opposite)
Saint Peter the Apostle, sixth century (detail, cat. no. 1).

NOTE
1. Translated from the Greek by N. P. Ševčenko in Thomas 1998, p. 802.

1 Saint Peter the Apostle

Sixth century

Encaustic on panel

93.4 × 53.7 × 1.25 cm (36¾ × 21⅛ × ½ in.)

CONDITION
Good condition. Halos and selected architectural details have been gilded. Scattered losses throughout the painting; several areas have been repainted. Greater loss to painting along bottom register. Medallion of Christ has several scratches that appear to be deliberate. Thin layer of varnish of a later date.

The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt

Figure 100
Anastasius, right panel of diptych, AD 517. Ivory, 36 × 13 cm (14⅛ × 5⅛ in.). Cabinet des Médailles, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris (55-296 bis).

THE LARGEST OF THE EARLY ICONS OF SINAI, presenting an almost-life-size half figure, this icon enunciates a theme of grand importance.[1] Saint Peter was immediately recognizable already in the fourth century as "an old man with hair and beard cut short," according to Epiphanius, the bishop of Cyprus.[2] Although in modern times he is commonly identified with the papacy, in early Christianity the first apostle had much more complex associations. The Gospels describe his close relationship with Christ, and the Acts of the Apostles tells of Peter's leadership role in the early Church, including authority in life-and-death judgments (ACTS 5:1–11) as well as the power to cure by the mere passage of his shadow (ACTS 5:15).

In the post-apostolic era a rich literature of apocrypha and legend grew up around his cult, including stories of his competition in magic with Simon Magus, and the "Domine, quo vadis?" story of his crucifixion.[3] Fleeing Rome during Nero's persecution, Peter encountered Christ on the Appian Way going in the opposite direction. "Where are you going, my Lord?" he asked. "I come to be crucified anew," Christ answered, and Peter promptly turned back to take his place on the cross. The cross Peter carries over his left shoulder alludes to the story. The keys in his right hand allude to Christ's bestowal on Peter of "the keys of the kingdom of heaven" (MATT. 16:19). Keys are also an attribute of abbots, which may add another level of meaning to the image.[4]

The icon presents Saint Peter in an outdoor setting before a classical niche decorated with a succession of bead-and-reel molding, a red-and-gold frieze, a cyma course, and a gold cornice. In the sky above are three gold medallions with bust images of Christ, the Mother of God, and a youthful saint—perhaps John the Evangelist. This association of the figure of Saint Peter with other, higher authorities in medallions reflects a composition developed in official government circles for presenting the consul. For example, in diptychs made for the accession of the consul, Anastasius the emperor, the empress, and a co-consul appear in medallions overhead (fig. 100).[5] In adopting this pictorial device for the icon, however, the artist has carefully purged it of all symbols of secular power—the eagle scepter, the nike figures, the lion throne, and the circus, which was the special arena of consular authority. Instead of the heavy leather loros of consular office, Saint Peter dresses in the civilian garb of a philosopher, with his right arm caught in the sling of his cloak. His authority is of another kind: "a spiritual leader, of aristocratic demeanor," as Weitzmann characterizes him.[6]

On stylistic grounds Weitzmann attributes the icon to Constantinople in the late sixth or early seventh century. But the group of Sinai icons with medallions seems to form a close unit with the Sinai Pantocrator and the Enthroned Mother of God with Angels. The range of styles in this group of icons has been examined by Hans Belting, who places them in the sixth century.[7] It is tempting to associate the Saint Peter icon personally with the emperor Justinian, whose Christian name was Peter.[8]

The icon has lost its grooved frame along with a narrow strip on each side. Heavy damage in the lower parts show wear from touching and kissing.

IFM

NOTES
1. Weitzmann 1976, pp. 23–26, with discussion of earlier bibliography.
2. C. Mango 1972, p. 42.
3. Acts of Peter, 35.
4. Rutschowscaya 1998, pp. 30–31.
5. Delbrueck 1929, no. 21.
6. Weitzmann 1976, p. 25.
7. Belting 1994, pp. 132–42.
8. See Mathews, "Early Icons of the Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine at Sinai," herein.

REFERENCES
G. Sotiriou and M. G. Sotiriou 1956–58, vol. 1, figs. 1, 2, and vol. 2, pp. 19–21; Lazarev 1967, pp. 92–93; A. Grabar 1968, pp. 78–79; Volbach and Lafontaine-Dosogne 1968, pp. 179–80; Weitzmann 1976, pp. 23–26; Kitzinger 1977, p. 120; Belting 1994, pp. 113–14, 132–33, 142–43.

2 Saint John the Baptist

Sixth century

Encaustic on panel

46.8 × 25.1 × 5–6.7 cm (18 × 9⅞ × 2–2⅝ in.)

CONDITION
Extensive loss to paint films, revealing panel support. No evidence of repainting. The panel has a series of vertical cracks; one large vertical loss runs length of panel. Rough-hewn on reverse.

The Bohdan and Varvara Khanenko Museum of Arts, Kiev, Ukraine

SECLUDED IN THE WILDERNESS OF JUDEA, the rugged ascetic John the Baptist "wore a garment of camel's hair, and a leather girdle around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey" (MATT. 3:4). Christ called him the last of the prophets and the "Elijah who is to come" (MATT. 11:14). In his icon he resembles the historic Elijah found in the Justinianic mosaic of the church of Sinai, wearing a similar cloak of hair, a metal-studded belt, and a brown tunic.[1] A model for the monk's life of self-denial, the Baptist was one of the most popular of Byzantine saints, with thirty-six churches in his honor in Constantinople. One may imagine that his icon was offered at Mount Sinai as a votive by a newly enrolled monk.

This exhibition's reunion of this icon and that of Saints Sergius and Bacchus (see cat. no. 3), both of which were taken from Sinai to Kiev in the nineteenth century with the grand Saint Peter icon (see cat. no. 1), affords a unique opportunity to assess an important phase of early Byzantine painting in Constantinople.[2] The three icons share the device of medallions that link the figures to higher powers in a superior register. Saint John is seen pointing with his right hand to the medallion of Christ and displaying with his other hand a scroll that reads, "Behold the lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (JOHN 1:29). The medallion in the other corner shows the Mother of God. (For the connection of this medallion device with official Constantinopolitan iconography, see cat. no. 1.)

At the Council of Trullo in 692 it was required that in images of this theme Christ be represented incarnate, as he is in the present medallion, rather than in the symbolic form of a lamb, as for example in the Cathedra of Maximianos.[3] On this basis Kathleen Corrigan argued for a date after the council,[4] but the iconography of the incarnate Christ with the gesturing Saint John existed even before the council, as Corrigan acknowledges, and the present style fits better with an earlier dating. In spite of the heavy loss of pigment, Weitzmann sensed the presence of a strongly modelled figure with the classic face of a tragic mask, who moves with freedom in a turbulent landscape. The Hellenistic shading of the drapery and the expressive quality of the face led him to suppose an early-sixth- or even late-fifth-century date. But a pre-Justinianic date is hard to justify in an icon offered to the monastery that Justinian founded. Rather, it makes sense to group all the medallion icons together in the mid-sixth century, along with their close *companions* the Pantocrator and the Enthroned Mother of God with Angels. Lively prophets in landscapes are an important part of the iconography of the mosaics of San Vitale in Ravenna of Justinianic date.[5]

The icon has lost its frame and with it the right and left edges. The extensive loss of pigment reveals a surprising lack of ground preparation; the paint was laid directly on the wooden board.

EFM

NOTES
1. Forsyth and Weitzmann 1973, pl. 106.
2. On this phase of early Byzantine icon painting see Belting 1994, pp. 132–42. On the present icon see Weitzmann 1976, pp. 32–35, with discussion of earlier bibliography.
3. Volbach 1962, fig. 227.
4. Corrigan 1988.
5. Deichmann 1958.

REFERENCES
Lazarev 1967, p. 93; Volbach and Lafontaine-Dosogne 1968, p. 79; Weitzmann 1976, pp. 32–35; Belting 1994, pp. 113, 132, 142; Corrigan 1995.

3 Saints Sergius and Bacchus

Sixth century

Encaustic and gold on panel

28.4 × 42.5 × 5–6 cm (11 3/16 × 16 7/16 × 2–2 3/8 in.)

CONDITION
Fair. Some losses to surface; areas of former retouching discolored throughout. Remnants of gilding on background of halos. Large crack runs through faces of both figures, with significant paint loss along crack. Orange was added to the border of the painted surface on the left side. Applied frame added later.

The Bohdan and Varvara Khanenko Museum of Arts, Kiev, Ukraine

LIKE THE ICON OF SAINT JOHN THE BAPTIST (see cat. no. 2), this icon was brought from Sinai to Kiev in the mid-nineteenth century.[1]

It is one of the axioms of icon study that the early icons were executed in encaustic—that is, wax was used for the medium—but surprisingly little scientific research has been done to confirm this.[2] On the basis of his experienced ocular inspection, reinforced in some instances by consultation with conservators, Weitzmann identified encaustic in most early icons at Sinai, but no analyses were done.[3] Three of the four of the earliest icons in Rome are also said to be encaustic, but only the icon of Santa Maria in Trastevere was subjected to any scientific examination—at the Istituto Centrale del Restauro.[4] It is therefore gratifying to have a scientific examination of three icons in Kiev—including that of Saints Sergius and Bacchus, shown here—which confirmed wax as the medium for all three.[5] The wood of this icon was identified as stone pine (*Pinus pinea*), commonly called the umbrella pine, native to the Iberian Peninsula but widely cultivated around the Mediterranean. The grain runs horizontally in the icon, which was dictated by the unusual horizontal format. The ground was prepared with a coat of calcite white followed by white lead, and pigments are white lead, smalt for the blue-green background, ultramarine for the blue outline of the halo, cadmium sulfide for the red outline of the halo, ultramarine mixed with crimson for Sergius's cloak. Described by Pliny the Elder, the encaustic medium is responsible for the glowing tones and glossy finish of the painting; a medium of egg or glue yields a more matte finish.[6] The choice of encaustic for icons would seem to reflect their connections with portrait painting; the majority of the Fayyum mummy portraits are in encaustic, but no encaustic has appeared in some seventy panel paintings of the ancient gods, also from the Fayyum.[7]

Saints Sergius and Bacchus carry martyrs' crosses. Military officers of the ranks of *primicerius* and *secundocerius* in service on the eastern frontier of the Roman Empire, they were executed for their profession of Christianity under the emperor Maximian (r. 286–305). Their cult was already established by the mid-fifth century, and Justinian seems to have taken them as special patrons in his contest with the Persians, founding a church in their honor in Constantinople.[8] In the present icon they dress rather for the court than for the battlefield, wearing gold tunics and light-colored cloaks, or *chlamydes*, with jeweled torques, or *maniakia*, around their necks. Military officers in the personal guard of Emperors Theodosius and Justinian wear such torques. Giving the saints the light complexion of youth, the artist has only slightly individualized them. They turn a little toward each other and toward the medallion of Christ, whose authority they share.

Scholarship has wavered on the dating of the panel between the sixth and the seventh century. Weitzmann points out its very close resemblances to the Enthroned Mother of God with Angels, in the facial types of the soldiers and in minor details such as the punched decoration of the border of the gold halo. A sixth-century dating for the latter is now more generally accepted, which would make Saints Sergius and Bacchus part of the splendid flowering of painting in Constantinople under Justinian.[9] The framing of the icon is secondary; generally frames were made before the painting of the panel and painted along with the panel. The inscriptions of the saints' names are also later.

HM

NOTES
1. Weitzmann 1976, pp. 28–30.
2. The traditional approach to encaustic painting is based exclusively on the review of literary sources in antiquity; Pfuhl 1923.
3. Weitzmann 1976
4. Amato 1988; Urbani 1964
5. Birstein, Bykova, and Naumova 1978, pp. 1–5.
6. Pliny, *Natural History*, 35.149.
7. Catalogue entries identify encaustic in three quarters of the Fayyum portraits in New York 2000; Norman Muller, conservator of paintings of the Princeton University Museum of Art, is studying the panel paintings in the project "Gods from Roman Egypt," now in progress with Vincent Muller and Thomas F. Mathews. His initial report, "Explorations into the Techniques of Late Antique Icons from the Fayum in Egypt," was presented at the Conservation Center, Institute of Fine Arts, New York University, March 31, 2005.
8. Mathews 2003.
9. Hans Belting 1994, pp. 132–42.

REFERENCES
Volbach and Lafontaine-Dosogne 1968, p. 79; Weitzmann 1976, pp. 28–30; Birstein, Bykova, and Naumova 1978; Cyril Mango in *ODB*, s.v. "Sergios and Bakchos, Church of Saints."

4 Crucifixion with Two Thieves

Eighth century

Tempera and gold on panel

46.6 × 25.1 × 1.4 cm (18 5/16 × 9 7/8 × 9/16 in.)

INSCRIBED

Ι(ησοῦ)C [Χριστός] (Jesus Christ); Ο ΒΑCΙΛΕΥC ΤΩΝ ΙΟΥ(δαίων) (King of the Jews); ΓΕCΤΑC (Gestas); ΔΗΜ(ας) (Demas); Η(άγία) Μ(αρία) (Saint Mary); ΙΩΑΝΝΗC (John)

CONDITION

Good condition overall. Crosses, decoration on Christ's robe and angels' halos originally gilded. Angels outlined in deep red paint; paint layer built up around figures, with artist using bare wood of panel to create middle tones. Large splits, breaks, and losses in wood panel. Remains of thin varnish.

The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt

THE IMPORTANCE OF THIS EIGHTH-CENTURY Crucifixion icon lies in its presentation of Christ on the cross with his eyes closed. While images of the crucified Christ are known from the early years of the fifth century, these and their successors showed Christ with his eyes open. Their open-eyed presentation has been understood to signal that Christ's divine nature continued to live even as his body died on the cross. The introduction of the closed-eyed type in this icon marks a significant turn in the representation of Christ, one that betrays an increased interest in the iconography of Christ's death in the later seventh and early eighth centuries.[1]

This Sinai image shows Christ after his death. The closed eyes and the blood and water flowing from his pierced side indicate this. The blood and the water bring two further themes into play. First, they show the presence of Christ's two natures, human and divine, at the moment of his death. In drawing attention to these natures, the icon attempts to accommodate the complexities of Christ's death. Being of two natures, Christ had to be understood to both live and die on the cross, a paradoxical concept that is difficult to convey by visual means. Here, the presence of the blood and the water implies the fundamental duality that underlies the incarnate and visibly deceased God. This might suggest that this icon shows that the divine had also died on the cross (a heretical view known as Theopaschitism), but a major source written by Anastasios, a monk at Sinai, in the second half of the seventh century suggests that the Crucifixion image was, rather, used to refute such an understanding by drawing attention to the reality of Christ's corporeal death on the cross and so distinguishing this death from the fate of his divine nature.[2]

Second, the depiction of blood and water in the icon, connoting the mixing together in the chalice of water and wine in the course of the eucharistic celebration, helps to link the sacrifice made at the Crucifixion with the sacrifice reiterated on the altar.[3]

CB

NOTES

1. Belting and Belting-Ihm 1966, pp. 36–39; Kartsonis 1986, pp. 40–81. Kartsonis 1994, pp. 166–68.
2. Kartsonis 1986, pp. 40–81.
3. Kartsonis 1994, p. 168.

REFERENCES

G. Sotiriou and M. G. Sotiriou 1956–58, vol. 1, fig. 25, and vol. 2, pp. 39–41; Belting and Belting-Ihm 1966, Weitzmann 1976, pp. 61–64, Galavaris 1990, p. 96; Kartsonis 1994, pp. 166–68.

IC
XC
VC
ΘY

5 Ascension of Christ

Ninth/tenth century, Palestinian school, Sinai(?)

Tempera on panel

41.9 × 27.5 × 1.6 cm (16½ × 10¹³⁄₁₆ × ⅝ in.)

INSCRIBED
Ἰ(ησοῦ)Ϲ Χ(ριστό)Ϲ (Jesus Christ); Υ(ἱὸ)Ϲ Θ(εο)Υ (Son of God)

CONDITION
Very good condition. Parts of frame missing at top and bottom, with the ground extending only as far as the original frame. Abrasion and losses to paint layers along right and left edges may be from contact with original triptych wings. Three nail holes, top and bottom, are visible where ledges for the wings were once attached. Short cracks run through the panel from the nail holes at the bottom, and one crack runs from the top, bisecting Christ's face.

The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt

ONCE THE CENTRAL ICON IN A TRIPTYCH, this work shows Christ's majestic ascent to heaven. Four angels bear him upward, their arms visible behind the transparent mandorla, while the apostles gesture animatedly below. Both Weitzmann and Galavaris noted the prominence of the Virgin, who is set apart from the group of assembled apostles on a footstool deemed unnecessary for a narrative scene.[1] The Virgin is further highlighted by the flowing lines of the angels' mantles, ending in points over her head, and the bush of red flowers directly behind her.

The gestures of the apostles initially appear to lack purpose; Weitzmann attributes their seeming incoherence to artistic weakness.[2] In fact, the artist created an explicitly mariological rendering of the Ascension scene. Unlike other Ascensions of the "active" type, in which the apostles motion energetically and stare upward, eight of the apostles direct their gazes and outstretched arms toward Mary (fig. 101).[3]

Weitzmann suggests that this work was an early manifestation of the Virgin of the Burning Bush motif, in which the Virgin appears fully immersed in the flames of the bush. This type does not otherwise appear until late-twelfth- and early-thirteenth-century icons associated with Sinai.[4] While this icon, like later examples, alludes to the established exegetical understanding of the Burning Bush as a symbol of Mary's virginity, its iconography draws from established Coptic and Palestinian models. This triptych was probably created at the

Figure 101
The Ascension. In the Rabbula Gospels, AD 586, fol. 13b. Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana Florence, Italy (Plut. 1.56).

Figure 102
Saint Theodore and Saint George on Horseback, outer wings of a triptych, ninth/tenth century. Tempera on panel. The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt. Photo: Bruce White.

NOTES

1. Weitzmann 1976, p. 70; Galavaris 1990, p. 96.
2. Weitzmann 1976, p. 70.
3. For overview of Ascension iconography, see DeWald 1915.
4. Twelfth-century Jerusalem Patriarchate image (see fig. 88), thirteenth-century Procopius diptych (see fig. 86), thirteenth-century Catherine and Virgin of the Burning Bush (cat. no. 56).
5. Weitzmann writes that in the tenth century a colony of Georgian monks left the monastery of Saint Sabas in Jerusalem to reside at Sinai; Weitzmann 1976, pp. 72–73.
6. A. Grabar 1958.
7. The Monastery of Saint Apollo, Chapel XVII, Bawit, Egypt. Ascension fresco, probably between the sixth and eighth century; Weitzmann 1976, pp. 70–71, fig. 27. See also Iacobini 2000, fig. 19, pp. 46–48.
8. Florence, Biblioteca Laurenziana, Codex Plut.1.56; Cecchelli, Furlani, and Salmi 1959.
9. See, for example, the Manganon Virgin in Athens 2000, p. 239, fig. 186.

REFERENCES

Weitzmann 1976; Galavaris 1990.

Figure 103
Virgin and Child. In the Rabbula Gospels, AD 586, fol. 1b. Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Florence, Italy (Plut.1.56).

monastery by Eastern artists; Weitzmann suggests that the side panel with Saint George spearing a human foe points to Georgian models (fig. 102), but the work also shares certain similarities with Palestinian and Coptic art.[5] The Ascension iconography resembles that seen in Palestinian pilgrim ampullae,[6] while the use of the flowering bush to make a connection to the site of the Burning Bush recalls examples from Coptic fresco painting (see fig. 79).[7]

While the Virgin's orant gesture and her position on a footstool call to mind the sixth-century Syriac Rabbula Gospels (fig. 103)[8] and relief icons of the eleventh century,[9] the added elements of the bush and the apostles' gestures suggest that the work was intended for placement in the Church of the Theotokos on the site of the Burning Bush.

KC

ΑΝΤΩΝΙΟΣ
ΒΑΣΙΛΕΙΟΣ

6 Presentation of the Mandylion to King Abgar

Tenth century, Sinai or Constantinople

Tempera and silver leaf with pigmented varnish on panel

Framed: 36.9 × 25.3 × 2.5 cm (13⁹⁄₁₆ × 10 × 1 in.)

INSCRIBED

Top left: Ο Α(γιος) [Θαδ]ΕΟC (Saint Thaddaeus); top right: ΑΥΤΑΡΟC (Abgar); bottom left: Ο Α(γιος) ΠΑΥΛΟC Ο ΘΙΒΕΟC (Saint Paul of Thebes); Ο Α(γιος) ΑΝΤΟΝΙΟC (Saint Anthony); bottom right: Ο Α(γιος) ΒΑCΙΛΙΟC (Saint Basil); Ο Α(γιος) ΕΦΡΕΜ (Saint Ephrem)

CONDITION

Image consists of two separate panels inserted into a pinned, lap-joint frame. The surface is very abraded with scattered losses and some repainting. Loss in wood on reverse of frame at top center. Left panel is split at right lower edge.

The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt

6, reverse

THE TWO PANELS THAT COMPOSE THIS ICON were originally the wings of a triptych. Weitzmann argues that they were painted by an artist from Constantinople; he also asserts that the wings would have originally framed a painted version of the famous Mandylion, or an image of Christ made by a direct impression from Christ's face, called in Greek *acheiropoietos*, or "not made by hands." The Mandylion itself was one of the most important miracle-working relics of Byzantium. The icon panels call attention to the narrative and history of the relic.

In the upper left of the icon sits Thaddaeus, numbered as one of the seventy unnamed apostles in Luke 10:1–20. The seated King Abgar, in the upper right, who ruled Edessa between 4 BC and AD 13–50, is given an imperial setting and royal garb. An image of Christ appears on a cloth draped across Abgar's torso. Abgar does not actually seem to be holding the cloth, for his left hand is placed in front in a gesture of presentation and his right hand is not shown at all. At his side is Ananias "the messenger."[1] According to legend, on falling ill Abgar wrote to Christ and asked that he be healed. Abgar sent Ananias to carry the message to Christ and paint his portrait. By the sixth or seventh century, the story had changed so that instead of being painted, Christ pressed a hand towel, also called a *mandylion*, over his face, leaving an imprint of his image.[2] Hence the Mandylion was called the *acheiropoietos*. It was the image itself that healed Abgar.

In 944 Abgar's Mandylion entered Constantinople in a triumphal procession at the instigation of the emperor Romanos I. The emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos (913–959) wrote an encomium in honor of the first anniversary of this entrance. According to Weitzmann, Constantine VII had the portrait of King Abgar on the right triptych wing painted in his own likeness. In this way Constantine VII, the newly enthroned emperor, was able to claim credit for the relic's transfer.[3]

Belting suggests that the original central panel of the triptych could have been one of the two now found in Rome and in Genoa.[4] Wolf contends that this triptych was a diplomatic gift to Sinai meant to draw attention to Constantine VII's possession of the original Mandylion.[5] Weitzmann notes the relationship of the portrait of Abgar to the icon of Saint John the Baptist from the sixth century (see cat. no. 2). The uncanny resemblance in highlighting, technique, and form supports the debated idea of a "Macedonian Renaissance," in which tenth-century artists deliberately quoted artistic forms and styles of the sixth century. Thus this icon combines a historically and politically nuanced narrative with a timeless and mystical religiosity.

AI

NOTES

1. Weitzmann 1960, p. 166.
2. Cameron 1983, pp. 82–83.
3. Weitzmann 1960, p. 183.
4. Belting 1994, pp. 210–11.
5. Wolf goes so far as to suggest that the painted icon of the Mandylion that was originally between the Sinai wings was sent to Constantinople in 1261 when the city needed an authentic example of the holy icon; Genoa 2004, p. 21.

REFERENCES

Weitzmann 1960; Weitzmann, M. Chatzidakis, and Radojčić 1967, p. 17, fig. 31; Weitzmann 1976, pp. 94–98; Mouriki 1990; Belting 1994, pp. 211–12, pl. 125; Kessler and Wolf 1998; Rome 2000, pp. 81–82, 92, no. III 3; Peers 2004, pp. 39–40, fig. 32; Genoa 2004, pp. 20–24, fig. 7, p. 34, fig. 6, pp. 81–85, fig. 2

ΙC
ΧC

7 Codex Theodosianus

ca. 975–1000, Constantinople(?)

Tempera and gold on parchment

Book: 31.9 × 24.1 × 15.6 cm
(12 9/16 × 9 1/2 × 6 1/8 in.)

CONDITION
Repoussé metal cover over wooden upper board, and red silk brocade over wooden lower board with bosses intact. Covers detached except for single thread at top station at lower board. Later repair to inside of upper board provides rough attachment and obscures figured Byzantine silk fragments. Remnants of woven silk fore-edge ties extant. Textblock consists of very fine parchment with paper strips applied along edges of all folios (later repair). Abrasion and flake losses scattered through each of the illuminations. Gold brilliant throughout with some flake losses.

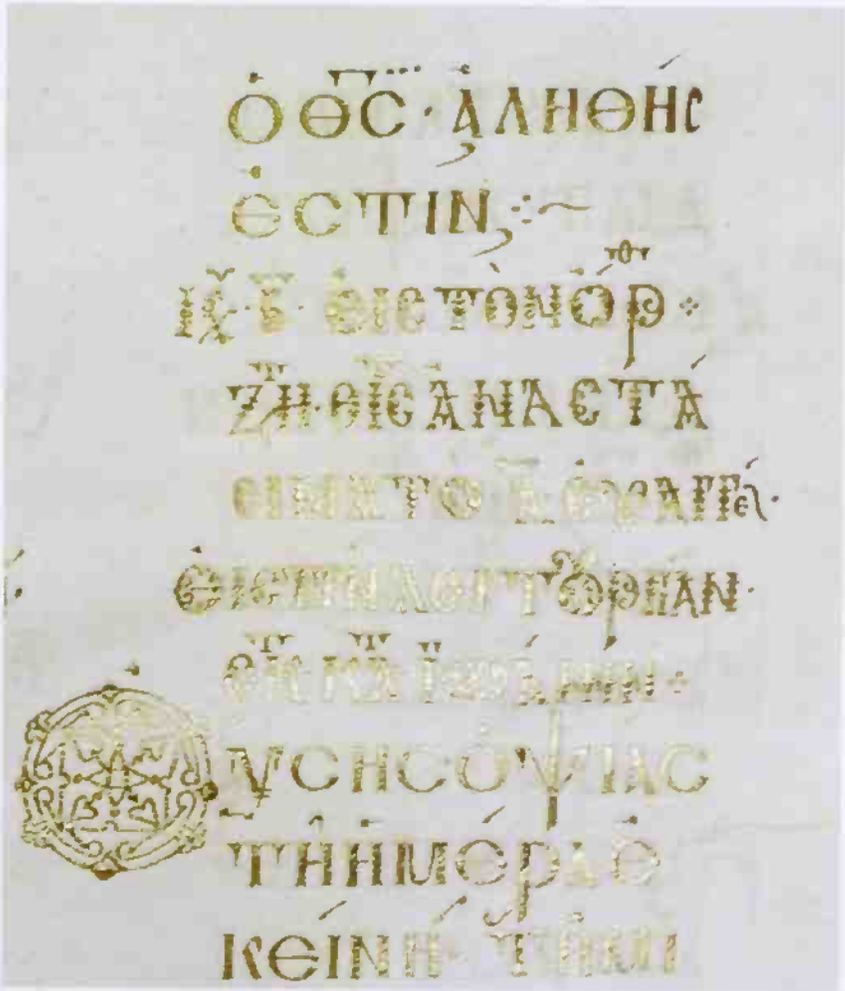
The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt (Sinai cod. 204)

WHEN THE RUSSIAN SCHOLAR Porfirii Uspenskii (1804–1885) studied the Sinai manuscripts in 1845, he found that four of them, which were considered especially valuable, were kept separately in the archbishop's apartments.[1] One of these was this lectionary, now called the Codex Theodosianus. It is not known how or when the book came to Sinai, where the monks considered it a gift from Emperor Theodosius (the last Byzantine ruler of that name died probably about 754).[2]

A standard lectionary contains passages from the Gospels arranged in the order in which they are read in church during the liturgical year. This volume is exceptional in that it has texts only for select Sundays and for major ecclesiastical holidays,[3] including February 7 and May 10: feasts, respectively, of "our holy father Peter" and of "the dedication of our monastery's church to the Virgin." Other manuscripts list February 7 as the feast day of Saint Peter of Monobata.[4]

The Byzantine convent of Monobata lay "at the farthest confines of the Emperor's lands"[5] and served as a place of exile for Constantinopolitan dignitaries fallen from power, such as Bishop Alexander of Nicaea in 944 or John the Orphanotrophos, brother of Emperor Michael IV, in 1042.[6] The present lectionary is the sole remnant of that monastery, whose very location has been forgotten.[7]

The volume has a copper-gilt front cover that, judging from the style of execution, must have been made in Italy around 1400. It bears Greek inscriptions, which suggests a Greek patron or recipient. The book itself, beautifully



7 (opposite), Christ, p. 1

7, detail, p. 47

7 (above), front cover with Crucifixion

7 (above right), back cover

preserved, is a work of great luxury. Its highly stylized script is copied entirely in gold ink and in capital letters. This type of Greek writing, known as majuscule, went out of use around 1000.[8] The style of the book's seven frontispiece miniatures provides further basis for dating: they are comparable to works of the last quarter of the tenth century, most notably the illustrations of a collection of saints' lives and of a psalter that were both made for Emperor Basil II (r. 976–1025).[9]

GRP

NOTES

1. Uspenskii 1856, pp. 225–42. The four manuscripts are London, British Museum, Add. 43725 (known as Codex Sinaiticus), Sinai gr. 204, Sinai gr. 67 (now lost), and Sinai gr. 1186. See also Antonini 1873, pp. 373–74.
2. Uspenskii 1856, p. 239.
3. On the illustration of this type of Gospel lectionary, see Zakharova 2004.
4. Sergii 1901, vol. 2, p. 37.
5. Alexander of Nicaea, cited in I. Ševčenko 1980, p. 738.
6. On the exile of Alexander of Nicaea, see Darrouzès 1960, pp. 28, 67; on that of John the Orphanotrophos, see Thum 1973, p. 416.
7. On the monastery's probable location, see Markopoulos 2000, p. 54*n. 52.
8. Cavallo 1977, pp. 108–9.
9. Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat. gr. 1613, known as the Vatican Menologion; Venice, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, Ms. gr. 17 (on the two see Venice 1998, pp. 125, 149–58, nos. 6–7, with bibliog.).

REFERENCES

Weitzmann and Galavaris 1990, pp. 42–47, no. 18 (with bibliog.), pls. xlvii–lvi, and pls. iii–viii; Galavaris 1995, pp. 348–50, figs. 15, 16; Weitzmann 1996, pp. 28–29, figs. 209, 211–12, and vol. 2, pp. 36, 88, fig. 670; Panagiotes I. Vokotopoulos in Athens 2002, pp. 416–17, no. 157.

7. Saint Peter of Monobata, p. 3

ΜΡ
ΘΥ

8 Mosaic Icon of the Virgin Hodegetria

Late twelfth/early thirteenth century

Glass and ceramic tesserae on panel

47.3 × 33.7 × 2.5 cm (17⅝ × 13¼ × 1 in.)

INSCRIBED

ΜΗ(τη)Ρ Θ(εο)Υ (Mother of God)

CONDITION

Large loss on left side (including sections of Christ's halo, shoulder, right arm, and tunic) has been filled in and inpainted. Tesserae set into an engaged walnut frame. Patterns of nail holes can be seen on beveled edge of frame.

The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt

THIS MOSAIC ICON OF THE MOTHER AND CHILD displays the quintessential image of prayer. The free hands of the two figures are engaged in a silent dialogue; the Mother presents the prayers of the viewer, while Christ offers blessing as a sign of divine benevolence. The Logos, or Word, is shown in two different forms: as flesh (a physical child) in his mother's arms and as text, symbolized by the scroll in Christ's hand.[1]

Although the composition purports to reproduce the standard Dexiokratousa type (Mary holding the very stately, imperial child in her right arm), several subtle deviations from this model introduce a totally new meaning in the panel: Christ is barefoot; his naked sole is exposed to the viewer; and his blessing gesture, with a thumb pressing the nameless (ring) finger—rather than the archaic configuration (thumb pressing the last two digits)—is directed away from the faithful toward the Mother of God. All three elements emerge in compositions that otherwise proleptically evoke Christ's Crucifixion. The late-twelfth-century fresco of the Virgin Arakiotissa at Lagoudera, Cyprus, offers one of the earliest extant examples (fig. 104).[2] The child's hand gesture and naked sole in the fresco are identical to the ones used in this mosaic icon from Sinai. At the same time, the Lagoudera fresco further strengthens the paschal associations. Christ is cradled in his mother's arms, and two angels floating above carry the instruments (cross and spear) of the Crucifixion. The reclining pose of the child, the vulnerability of his naked feet, and the Passion relics conjure up the image of his future suffering and death on the cross.[3] His blessing hand is turned away from the viewer toward his mother as if he acknowledges the infinite magnitude of Mary's motherly sacrifice.

Figure 104
Virgin Arakiotissa, ca. 1192. Fresco. Panagia tou Arakou, Lagoudera, Cyprus.

The Lagoudera composition is linked to the Constantinopolitan art of the late Comnenian period, yet it appears to have avid following in the Crusader production of the thirteenth century.[4] It is the fragility, vulnerability, and psychological complexity of the Lagoudera formula that appeals to Western sensitivity.[5] The Sinai mosaic icon is a hybrid of the stately and emotional modes of representation of the Virgin and Child.[6] Echoes of proleptic suffering and sacrifice ruffle the otherwise calm surface of these imperial figures. In what follows I will bring up a few more features that hint at a Crusader rather than a Constantinopolitan attribution for this icon.

While the Virgin is identified with the *sigla* "Mother of God" set in red medallions, the abbreviated initials of Christ are absent. This discrepancy—paired with the fact that Christ and Mary do not direct their gaze at the viewer—suggests a non-Constantinopolitan production. In Byzantine icons of the Virgin and Child, at least one of the two sacred figures usually directly engages the viewer.[7] This interactive model is lost in the Sinai panel. Instead, the image displays a pictorial space that excludes the spectator but introduces emotional tenderness, which seems to have greatly appealed to Western artists and audiences.[8] The decorative motifs in the background and frame lend further support for a Crusader attribution. They appropriate Byzantine patterns, but modify them; the crenellated design uses only half of the regular Byzantine stepped-cross pattern, and the morphed acanthus rinceaux transform the standard design.[9] The Sinai mosaic icon is thus most likely the product of a Crusader (Venetian?) artist who was fascinated both with the psychological depth of a few new Byzantine iconographic formulas of the Virgin and Child and with the splendidly adorned Constantinopolitan state icons such as the Hodegetria.[10] He created a Western hybrid, fusing Byzantine imperial art with the emotionally rich images of the liturgical rite.

BP

NOTES

1. Pentcheva 2006a, pp. 114–16.
2. Nicolaïdès 1996, p. 111 n. 985 (with bibliog.).
3. Belting 1994, pp. 287–90, fig. 176; Belting 1990, pp. 117–19, fig. 66.
4. New York 2004, pp. 357–58, 468–70, 480, nos. 216, 278, 279, 289. I thank Anthony Cutler for this suggestion. A Cypriot icon of the late thirteenth century exhibits very similar iconography (see London 2000, pp. 154–55, no. 22). N. P. Kondakov also suggests the possibility of a Western provenance for the Sinai mosaic icon, comparing it to the panels of the Madonna at Altìri and at Grottaferrata: Kondakov in Beneševič 1925, pp. 28–30, pl. 19.
5. A. W. Carr (2004, p. 279) has presented a similar case of Western artists' preference for Byzantine formulas exploring Mary's maternity rather than her stately demeanor (the latter more prominent in the Constantinopolitan tradition). Similarly, it is the Byzantine emotional image types, such as the Eleousa Virgin or the Christ as the Man of Sorrows, that are most avidly appropriated in the West; see Belting 1990, pp. 131–89. The same preference for the Byzantine emotional models over the stately image types is also characteristic of the Slavic, especially Russian, tradition.
6. For the icons' use of hybrid compositions and visual quotations to conjure up a series of complex associations, see Pentcheva 2006a.
7. See, for instance, Vokotopoulos 1995, nos. 3, 22, 25, 45, 53, 67, 75, 99.
8. See note 5. In addition, see also the Western examples in Belting 1990, figs. 8, 9, 10, 16, 17, 19, 81, 83.
9. Both patterns compromise the standard Byzantine designs as seen in the enamel icon of the archangel Michael, which was brought to San Marco in Venice and refashioned by local craftsmen in the wake of the fourth Crusade. This icon also exhibits thirteenth-century Venetian acanthus rinceaux strips; New York 1984, pp. 141–47, no. 12, and pp. 258–63, no. 36 (for Venetian rinceaux). For the Crusader artists' mutation of enamel revetments, see Frinta 1981. For Crusader icons produced in Acre, see Weitzmann 1963 and Folda 2005.
10. The Hodegetria was splendidly decorated with enameled revetments, gems, pearls, and silk veils; see Pentcheva 2006a, pp. 109–43.

REFERENCES

G. Sotiriou and M. G. Sotiriou 1956–58, vol. 1, fig. 71, and vol. 2, pp. 85–87; Demus 1991, pp. 51–55, no. 10; Vokotopoulos 1995, pp. 207–8, no. 7; Lidov 1999, pp. 76–77, no. 19, with earlier Russian literature; Edmund C. Ryder in New York 2004, pp. 348–49, no. 207.

8 (opposite), detail

9 Virgin Hodegetria

ca. 1250s, Saint-Jean d'Acre(?)

Tempera and silver leaf with pigmented glazes over gesso and parchment on panel

24.8 × 17.8 × 1.6 cm (9¾ × 7 × ⅝ in.)

INSCRIBED
Ι(ησοῦ)C Χ(ριστό)C (Jesus Christ);
Μ(ήτη)Ρ Θ(εο)Υ (Mother of God)

CONDITION
Relief design in background created by applying thick drops of preparation material over panel and carving swirled forms. Silver leaf applied over the relief pattern. Selected areas of background contain red glaze. Engaged frame created by adding strips of parchment to the front of the panel and then adding preparation layer. Entire bottom edge has been lost. Large split in panel runs through Christ child.

The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt

NOTES
1. Folda 2005, pp. 327–31.
2. Folda 2005, pp. 282–359.
3. Papageorgiou 1970, figs. 27, 37.
4. Jaroslav Folda in New York 1997a, p. 395, no. 261; Jaroslav Folda in New York 2004, pp. 357–59, no. 216.
5. Weitzmann et al. 1982, pp. 203, 217–18; Folda 2005, fig. 182.
6. Weitzmann et al. 1982, p. 203.

REFERENCES
Weitzmann 1963, pp. 199–201, fig. 22; Weitzmann et al. 1982, pp. 203, 219; Immia 1983, pp. 147–67, fig. 4; Folda 1992, pp. 110–12, fig. 105; Folda 2005, pp. 327–29, 532, fig. 181.

THIS SMALL VIRGIN HODEGETRIA DEXIOKRATOUSA, in which the Christ child sits on the Virgin's right arm, belongs to a group of images made during the mid-thirteenth century and attributed to the city of Acre.[1] It fits within the production of Crusader ateliers working in what has been called the Franco-Byzantine style, practiced by painters trained in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem and familiar with Western and Byzantine iconography and style.[2] This Acre group is characterized by brightly highlighted faces, bulging eyes, pearl-like halo borders, and gilded, gesso relief, or *pastiglia*, which covers the background and frame and may have developed in imitation of Byzantine repoussé metal icon covers (see detail, below). Similar gesso ornamentation occurs in images made on Cyprus, but this formulation of foliate spirals around small dots seems limited to the Acre group and is so consistent and distinctive that it may be the hallmark of a single atelier.[3] Indeed, although Jaroslav Folda and others have argued that several related manuscript and icon ateliers were active in mid-thirteenth-century Acre, their production remains difficult to separate.

Among the icons with *pastiglia* decoration are several image types, including a Saint George on horseback, in London, and the wings of a Sinai triptych with the Virgin and Child with angels framed by four scenes from the life of the Virgin.[4] Closest in style to the present Virgin Hodegetria is a slightly larger Sinai panel depicting the Virgin of the Burning Bush between Moses and Elijah, accompanied by Saint Gregory Nazianzenus (or Saint Nicholas; fig. 105).[5] This image connects its atelier to the *locus sanctus* of Sinai, for pilgrimage to the Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine at Sinai included visits to sites of veneration for Moses and Elijah and to the Chapel of the Burning Bush. While it is possible that painters from the atelier were active at Sinai, it is more likely that such images with these two prophets were made at Acre for personal devotion, perhaps in anticipation of pilgrimage. Similarly, although Kurt Weitzmann noted its resemblance to a Byzantine mosaic icon at Sinai, this small Hodegetria was most likely intended originally for personal devotion and subsequently offered as a votive gift on a visit to Sinai, perhaps as a donation to the Chapel of Saint Catherine of the Franks.[6]

RWC

9, reverse

9, detail of frame

Figure 105 (right)
Virgin of the Burning Bush between Moses, Elijah, and Saint Gregory Nazianzenus (or Saint Nicholas), ca. 1250s. Tempera and metal leaf on gesso and wood, 32.3 × 25.7 cm (12¾ × 10⅛ in.). The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt.

ΗΔΗΔΕΚΑΙΗΔΗ
ΝΗΓΟΣΤΗΡΙΚΑΝΞΔΕ
ΔΡΥΚΕΙΤΑΙ·ΠΑΝΤΑ
ΔΕΝΔΡΟΝΜΗΠΟΙΟΥ
ΚΑΡΠΟΝΚΑΛΟΝΕΚ
ΚΟΠΤΕΤΑΙΚΑΙ
ΕΙΣΠΥΡΒΑΛ
ΤΑΙ·:·
ΟΡΑΣΟΣΑΡΑΤΥΧΩΝΩΝΟΥΛΟΓΕ
ΟΙΤΥΣΕΛΕΓΜΥΣΜΗΦΕΡΟΝΤΕΣ
ΤΥΣΚΟΤΥΣΙΔΥΓΑΡΥΤΟΙΤΗΝΕΜΗΝ
ΤΑΥΤΗΝΚΑΡΔΙΑΝ·ΚΡΥΠΤΟΥΣΙΝΕΙΣΗΝΤΩΞΙΦΕΙ
ΤΕΤΗΚΟΤΕΣ·ΑΜΩΣΠΕΡΑΤΗΝΕΞΑΦΝΗ
ΝΥΣΤΥΣΤΡΥΕΙΣΦΣΕΠΑΝΗΓΑΓΕΣ
ΟΙΣΟΙΔΑΣΤΟΠΟΙΣ·ΥΠΟΔΥΣΩ
ΠΩΣΩΣΟΝΑΥΤΟΣΕΝΕΒΙΩ·
ΤΟΥΣΤΗΝΕΜΗΝΣΕΒΟΝΤΑΣ
ΘΕΟΥΤΗΝΕΙΚΟΝΑ·:·
ΗΔΕΘΑΝΗ
ΜΟΣΤΟΥ
ΒΑΙΡΩΝ
ΟΥΜΑΡ
ΒΑΝΤΟΚ

10 Saint John the Baptist with Scenes from His Life

Early thirteenth century, Balkans(?)

Tempera and gold leaf on panel

41.1 × 32.2 × 2.1 cm (16 3/16 × 12 11/16 × 13/16 in.)

INSCRIBED

Top left: Η CΥΛΛΗΨΙC (Conception); top center: Η [Βάπ]ΤΙCΙC (Baptism); Ο Α(γιος) Ἰω(άννης) Ο ΠΡΟΔΡ(ο)ΜΟC (Saint John the Forerunner); on the purple scroll carried by John: Ἴδε ὁ Ἀμνὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ ὁ αἴρων τὴν ἁμαρτίαν τοῦ κόσμου (Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world [JOHN 1:29]); behind John: Ἤδη δὲ καὶ ἡ ἀξίνη πρὸς τὴν ῥίζαν τοῦ δένδρου κεῖται· πᾶν οὖν δένδρον μὴ ποιοῦν καρπὸν καλὸ[ν] ἐκκόπτεται καὶ εἰς πῦρ βάλλεται. (And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire [MATT. 3:10; LUKE 3:9]); above John's severed head:
ὁρᾷς ὅσα πράττουσιν ὦ Θεοῦ λόγε· οἱ τοὺς ἐλεγμοὺς μὴ φέροντες τοῦ σκότους· ἰδοὺ γὰρ οὗτοι τὴν ἐμὴν ταύτην κραν· κρύπτουσιν εἰς γῆν τῶ ξίφει τετμηκότες· ἀλλ' ὥσπερ α[ὐ]τὴν ἐξ ἀφανοῦς τοῦ τόπου· εἰς φῶς ἐπανάγαγες οἷς οἶδας τρόπ[ο]ις· οὕτως δυσωπῶ σῶσον αὐτούς εν βίω· τοὺς τὴν ἐμὴν σεβοντας σεπτὴν εἰκόνα. (You see what they do, O Word of God; those who do not bear the refutations of their darkness. For, behold, they cover this head of mine in the earth, having cut it off with a sword. But since you have returned it from its hidden place, into the light by means which you know, so I beg you preserve those in life, who reverence my venerable icon.)[1]

CONDITION

Figures painted on an off-white background; yellow discolored varnish covers entire icon. Gold leaf applied to selected areas including haloes, ax handle, staff and text. Large loss to panel at upper left. Reverse: striped design over white preparatory layer

The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt

ARRANGED AROUND A PAINTED TREFOIL ARCH, this icon portrays John the Baptist addressing a prayer to Christ. This icon is unusual in its use of this painted frame, the blue line that delineates and decorates the interior field, and apparent variation in the ground (with gold reserved for framing images rather than the white ground on which John stands).

The predominant image shows John offering a prayer to Christ, who responds while looking up to the central image of the Baptism above. The Virgin Mary is also incorporated into this exchange, as she is shown holding a cloth, which she appears to offer to John. The two upper roundels show the miraculous origins of the Baptist. These images of the Annunciation to Zacharias and John's nativity echo similar themes found in the depictions of Christ's life.

This complex icon offers a number of overlapping themes. In the first instance, John is identified as the last prophet (the Forerunner) who identifies Christ as the Lamb of God. This utterance is inscribed in gold on the purple scroll. Its presence here calls attention to the shift from verbal prophecy to the actual eyewitness that the Incarnation made possible.

The implications of this shift are then developed in the two lengthy inscriptions found on either side of John, which build on each other both to explain the iconography and to extend our understanding of the icon. The inscription behind John is a direct quote from the Gospel. It is part of a speech directed at the Pharisees and the Sadducees that announces Christ's coming, the changed dispensation that arises from this event, and the beginning of the Judgment itself. The ax and the tree beneath the text remind the reader/viewer of the passage's central metaphor. The second lengthy inscription is an epigram that was perhaps written for this icon. The epigram continues the Baptist's condemnation of those who refuse the consequences of the Incarnation, identifying them with those who have hidden John's head. This head is seen below the inscription, presented in a font that calls attention to the second baptism of John's own martyrdom.[2]

Finally, the epigram introduces those who venerate this icon into John's prayer. In so doing, the text calls attention to the cult paid to this icon, identifying such cult practice as being beneficial to those who participate in it. Their eyewitness is thus accorded a value akin to John's own.

CB

10, reverse

NOTES

1. My transcription of the epigram differs slightly from that found in G. Sotiriou and M. G. Sotiriou 1956–58, vol. 2, p. 98, and includes original scribal errors. My translation differs from that found in Walter 2000, p. 316. Thanks to Dave Jenkins for editing my translation of the epigram.
2. Walter 2000, p. 316.

REFERENCES

G. Sotiriou and M. G. Sotiriou 1956–58, vol. 1, fig. 86, and vol. 2, pp. 98–99; Walter 2000; Yuri Piatnitsky in Saint Petersburg and London 2000, pp. 210–12.

ΟΙΑΓΙΟΙ
ΠΑΙΔΕΣ

11 The Three Hebrews in the Fiery Furnace, Daniel in the Lions' Den

Thirteenth century, Sinai or Palestine

Tempera and gold on panel

41.3 × 34.4 × 1.1 cm (16¼ × 13⁹⁄₁₆ × ⅜ in.)

INSCRIBED

On the obverse, in twelve-syllable Greek verse: Ἀρθεὶς Ἀμβακούμ, ὡς ὁρᾷς, παρ' ἀγγέλου / τροφὴν κομίζει Δανιὴλ ταχυτάτην (Habakkuk, raised, as you see, by an angel, / carries most swiftly nourishment to Daniel); Ο ΑΡΧ(άγγελος) ΜΙΧ(αὴλ) (Archangel Michael); ΟΙ ΑΓΙΟΙ Γ' ΠΑΙΔΕϹ (The Three Holy Children); ἡ φλὸξ τοῦ πύρὸς φλέγουσα τοὺς Χαλδαίους (The fire's flame burning up the Chaldeans); Εὐλογεῖτε, πάντα τὰ ἔργα Κ(υρίο)υ, τὸν Κ(ύριο)ν· ὑμνεῖτ(ε) καὶ ὑπ(ερ)ὑψοῦτε αὐτὸν εἰ(ς) τ(οὺ)ς αἰῶν(ας). Εὐλογεῖτε, ἄγγελοι Κ(υρίο)υ, οὐ(ρα)νοὶ Κ(υρίο)υ, τὸν Κ(ύριο)ν· ὑμνεῖτ(ε) κ(αὶ) ὑπ(ερ)ὑψοῦτ(ε). Εὐλογεῖτε, πν(εύμ)ατα. Εὐλογεῖτε, Ἀνανία, Ἀζαρία, Μισαήλ, τὸν Κ(ύριο)ν· ὑμνεῖτ(ε) κ(αὶ). Εὐλογεῖτε, ἀπόστολοι, προφῆτ(αι) κὲ μάρτυρες Κ(υρίο)υ, τὸν Κ(ύριο)ν ὑμ(ῶν). (Bless the Lord, all you works of the Lord; sing praise to him and highly exalt him forever. Bless the Lord, you angels of the Lord, you heavens of the Lord; sing praise to him and highly exalt. Bless the Lord, spirits. Bless the Lord, Hananiah, Azariah, Mishael; sing praise and . . . [Apocrypha: Song of the Three Jews 35–37, 64–66] Bless the Lord, apostles, prophets and martyrs of the Lord);[1] on the reverse, in Arabic:

برسم القسيس اكلمي

(painted/commissioned by the priest Aklami)[2]

CONDITION

Gilding has been restricted to the center panel and inner beveled edges; engaged frame is painted. Gilded decoration on costume has been applied with gold leaf over paint. Dark amber-colored varnish appears over the entire surface.

The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt

THE VERSIFIED INSCRIPTION ON THE LEFT EDGE of this icon addresses the viewer of the adjacent small scene (Apocrypha: Bel and Dragon 31–42), while the opposite side of the frame shows King Nebuchadnezzar viewing the execution he ordered (DAN. 3:8–27).[3] In the center of the panel the three Hebrews are portrayed, according to Byzantine tradition, as beardless youths in Persian costume. In Constantinople, where their bodies were preserved as relics, the miraculous story of the "Holy Children" was reenacted in a semitheatrical manner on their feast day, December 17.[4] It is possible that the present icon was annually displayed in church for veneration on that day,[5] which is also the feast of the prophet Daniel. Images of the three Hebrews and of Daniel with the prophet Habakkuk are often found close to the altar in the wall paintings of Byzantine churches.[6] This panel must have originally hung in a similar position. A 2004 photograph shows it standing on a shelf against the north wall of the Sinai basilica.[7]

The short text in Arabic on the back indicates that the icon was made for a local patron, perhaps at Sinai itself. It is comparable in style to a number of paintings preserved in the monastery, such as the panels with Saints Basil and Chrysostom (cat. nos. 26, 27) or two murals published by Chatzidakis.[8] This group also includes the funerary portrait of Patriarch Euthymios II (cat. no. 53), so it can be dated in its entirety to the thirteenth century.

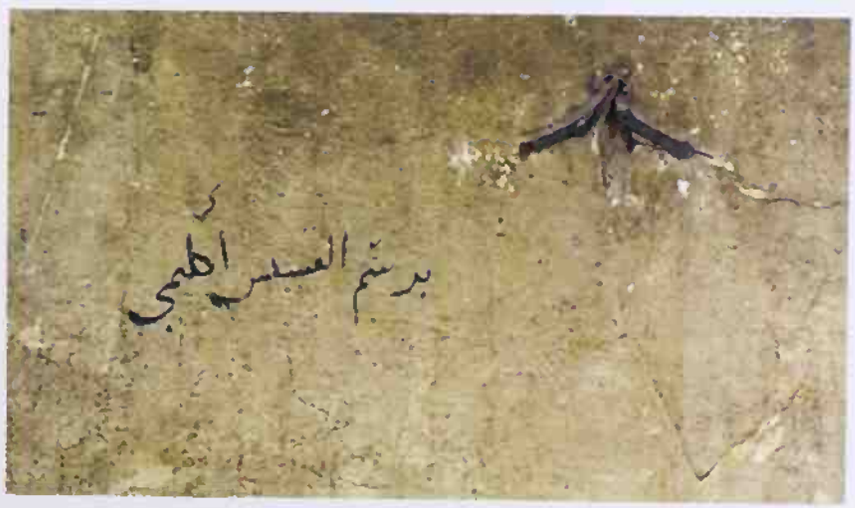
GRP

NOTES

1. Compare the Holy Transfiguration Monastery translation in *Great Horologion* 1997, pp. 91–92.
2. Transcribed and translated by George Saliba and Linda Komaroff.
3. On the iconography of the two scenes, see Brubaker 1999, pp. 366–70 (with bibliog.); Gabelić 1990, pp. 87–89 (with bibliog.).
4. Catherine Brown Tkacz, John H. Lowden, and Anthony Cutler in *ODB*, s.v. "Three Hebrews" (with bibliog.).
5. On this custom at Sinai in the late sixteenth century, see Papadopoulos-Kerameus 1891, p. 19, lines 476–80; compare also Lazarev 1977, pp. 50–51 n. 4, pl. v.
6. Klaus Wessel in *Reallexikon zur byzantinischen Kunst*, s.v. "Daniel," and "Jünglinge im Feuerofen."
7. Photograph in Evans 2004, p. 54.
8. M. Chatzidakis 1970–72, pp. 225–28, pls. 83, 84.

REFERENCE

N. Nikolaidis, cited in Rabino 1935, p. 47, and in Rabino 1938, p. 59.



11, detail of reverse, with Arabic inscription

Ο Α Ρ
Χ
Μ Ι

12 Archangel Michael with Donor Monk

Early thirteenth century, Sinai

Tempera and gold on panel

41.8 × 28.3 × 2.7 cm (16 7/16 × 11 1/8 × 1 1/16 in.)

INSCRIBED

Ο ΑΡΧ(ἀγγελος) ΜΙΧ(αήλ) (Archangel Michael)

CONDITION

Good condition. Scattered losses over entire panel with larger losses in the drapery of the angel Michael and foreground. Chrysography created with cut gold leaf. Gold restricted to inner panel and beveled edge. Traces of preparation layer overlapping frame indicate loss of an original surface. Frame overpainted in blue followed by yellow paint. Discolored and uneven varnish layers.

The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt

THIS ICON OF THE ARCHANGEL MICHAEL is one of eight icons produced at Sinai that depict a monk offering particular devotion to a given saint.[1] This example shares many of the features of this group, including the relatively diminished scale of the anonymous monk and the visible veneration performed by this presumed donor.

The archangel Michael was a very important saint in Byzantium.[2] Two feast days were associated with him—September 8, when the miracle at his cult center at Chonae in western Asia Minor was celebrated, and November 8, when the archangels were celebrated together. Furthermore, angels in general were idealized models for the bodiless spirituality sought in monastic practice and clerical ideology.[3] While a particular Sinai connotation might be suggested from the mention of the archangel Michael in the Epistle of Jude (verse 9), when Jude notes that Michael disputed with the devil over the body of Moses, the image seen here does not make such a link. Rather, this icon offers an image of intercession. Michael is not shown in the court costume in which he is often represented. Rather, he wears a purple tunic with a deep blue himation (mantle). Only the red shoes, reserved for the Byzantine emperor, point to his high status. Michael stands in a barely defined landscape, knees bent and body stooped. His eyes look up at an unseen object, and his hands are covered by the folds of his himation. For those acquainted with Byzantine iconography, this pose has two associations: the angels at Christ's baptism, who hold the clothes that he will wear after he emerges from the Jordan, and the participants at the Divine Liturgy, who receive the Eucharist with covered hands. In the icon, the covered hands of the archangel may indicate that he is to be the recipient of a sacred gift from an unseen God, the divine grace that the donor-monk has sought through Michael's mediation.

CB

NOTES

1. Mouriki 1995, pp. 110, 129–34.
2. C. Mango 1984; Peers 2001, pp. 157–93.
3. An important visual example of this commonplace monastic thought is to be found in the image of Neophytos between Archangels in the Enkleistra of Neophytos on Cyprus, painted in 1183; Cormack 1985, pp. 215–51.

REFERENCES

G. Sotiriou and M. G. Sotiriou 1956–58, vol. 1, fig. 159, and vol. 2, p. 139; C. Mango 1984; Mouriki 1995, pp. 110, 129–34; Peers 2001, pp. 157–93.

Ο ΧΑΙΡΕΤΙΣΜΟΣ

13 Annunciation

Late twelfth century, Sinai or Constantinople

Tempera and gold on panel

63.1 × 42.2 × 3.2 cm (24 1/16 × 16 5/8 × 1 1/4 in.)

INSCRIBED
O ΧΑΙΡΕΤΙCΜΟC (Annunciation)

CONDITION
Very good condition. Dove symbolizing holy spirit painted directly over ground layer. Background details painted in heavy brown paint. Incised halos around figures of Gabriel, dove, and God. Shaft of light was created with shallow incised lines and then burnished. Very uneven varnish layer. Engaged frame appears to have been gilded originally; orange and aqua overpaint at top and bottom edges. On reverse, painted treatment directly on panel; extensive loss to paint.

The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt

13, detail

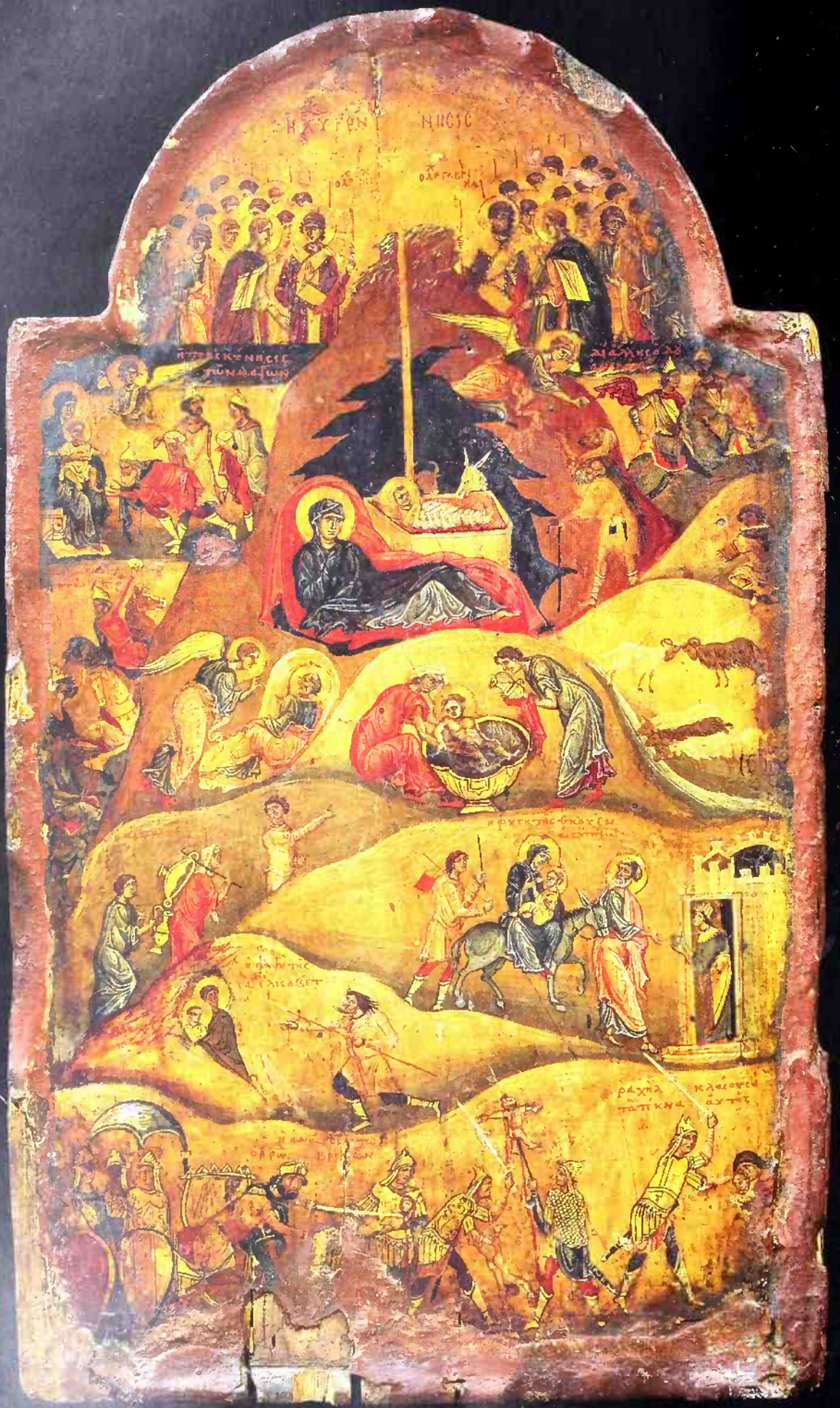
SWATHED IN ELEGANTLY AGITATED DRAPERY, the angel Gabriel announces the news of the birth of Christ. The ornamentally hammered drapery and serpentine twisting of the angel, characteristic of the late Comnenian style, echo the jagged coastline below and contrast with the calm figure of the Virgin, who interrupts her spinning, turns toward the angel, and responds in a gesture of speech. Although described by Weitzmann as a "frail maiden,"[1] Mary neither shrinks from the messenger nor raises her hand in fear, like the Virgin of the iconostasis doors (cat. no. 22). The purple wool dangling from the Virgin's left hand touches a faint grisaille mandorla that contains a ghost image of the Christ child.[2] Such a representation might be expected over Mary's womb, but here it falls on the Virgin's right breast. Apparently the artist seeks to capture the moment when the Holy Spirit, descending along a burnished ray of gold in the form of a dove, floats into Mary's body. Yet because the inscription labels the scene as the Annunciation, the icon is also meant to evoke the entire narratological event, not merely one moment within it. The Byzantine viewer's associations with the icon and event have been understood through Byzantine homilies and the early Byzantine Akathistos Hymn.[3]

The temporally and spatially synthetic organization of the icon emphasizes the contrast and antithesis inherent in this event. The angel delivers the Word of God, which arrives both as a dove and as a child. Mary, a humble woman spinning wool, is also the Mother of God sitting on a bejeweled throne. The dynamic wildlife indicates the springtime, while the golden ground creates a timeless setting. Mary sits in front of a house replete with pilasters, arcades, tiled roofs, and a rooftop garden, but the setting is both rural and urban. The imaginative setting may relate to the place of production. Mouriki argues that both this icon and the Heavenly Ladder of John Climacus (see cat. no. 48) were painted by the same Constantinopolitan artist at Sinai.[4] Much like the landscape depicted in the Annunciation icon, the Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine at Sinai is a dense complex of urban structures located near a bountiful oasis, yet set within the limitless and faceless space of a desert.

AL

NOTES
1. Weitzmann, M. Chatzidakis, and Radojčić 1967, p. 26.
2. This unusual presentation of the Christ child does appear in other instances, including an early Coptic icon (Morey 1942, p. 81), a twelfth-century Russian icon (Schiller 1971, fig. 98), and later western European paintings, including a work by Paolo Veneziano (see Schiller 1971, Type 5 Venice 1; and Sborr 1954, figs. 113, 142). This placement of the Christ child over the Virgin's womb is also related to the Virgin Blachernitissa type.
3. Maguire 1981, p. 45.
4. Mouriki 1990, p. 108.

REFERENCES
Weitzmann 1965; Weitzmann, M. Chatzidakis, and Radojčić 1967, p. 26, fig. 54; Weitzmann 1978, pp. 19–21, pl. 27; Maguire 1981, pp. 48–51, pl. 42; Maguire 1983; Mouriki 1990, pp. 107–8, 160, fig. 29; Belting 1994, pp. 278–79, pl. 167; Annemarie Weyl Carr in New York 1997a, pp. 374–75, no. 246; Cormack 2000b, p. 42, fig. 4; Peers 2004, p. 103, fig. 67.



14 Scenes of the Nativity

Eleventh century, Constantinople(?)

Tempera and metal leaf (probably gold) with pigmented varnish on panel

36.3 × 21.6 × 1.6 cm (14⅜ × 8½ × ⅝ in.)

INSCRIBED

Η Χ(ριστο)Γ ΓΕΝΝΕCΙC (The Birth of Christ); ΟΙ ΜΑΓΟΙ ΟΔΗΓΟΥΜΕΝΟΙ ΥΠΟ ΑCΤΕΡΟC (The Magi led by the star); Η ΠΡΟCΚΥΝΕCΙC ΤΩΝ ΜΑΓΩΝ (The *proskynesis* of the Magi); ΔΙ' ΑΛΛΗC ΟΔΟΥ ΑΝΕΧΩΡΗCΑΝ (They leave by another route); ΙΩCΗΦ ΥΙΕ ΔΑΒΙΔ ΜΗ ΦΟΒΟΥ ΠΑΡΑΛΑΒΕΙΝ ΜΑΡΙΑΝ ΤΗΝ ΓΥΝΑΙΚΑ CΟΥ (Joseph, son of David, fear not to take Maria as your wife); Η ΦΥΓΗ ΤΗC ΘΕΟΤΟΚΟΥ ΕΙC ΑΙΓΥΠΤΟΝ (The flight of the Theotokos into Egypt); Η ΦΥΓΗ ΤΗC Α(γίας) ΕΛΙCΑΒΕΤ (The flight of St. Elizabeth); ΗΡΩΔΗC (Herod); Η ΑΝΑΙΡΕCΙC ΤΩΝ ΒΡΕΦΩΝ (The slaughter of the innocents); ΡΑΧΗΛ ΚΛΑΙΟΥCΑ ΤΑ ΤΕΚΝΑ ΑΥΤΗC (Rachel mourning her children)[1]

CONDITION

Very good condition. Figural details created with cut gold leaf. Uneven varnish layer with slight losses. Losses to engaged frame. Reverse: striped design over white preparatory layer with fragments of canvas backing applied later.

The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt

THIS SMALL, NARROW PANEL, formerly part of a diptych, presents a remarkably elaborate cycle of the birth and infancy of Christ.[2] The birth of Christ is strongly emphasized, in the scale of the central scene and in the strong, arresting colors in this passage. Around this essential core of incarna-tional theology made visible, other scenes lay out cosmic and terrestrial repercussions of the event. At the top of the panel, a choir of angels parts to celebrate the descent of the Holy Spirit. Other scenes from the infancy tradition fill the remainder of the icon, and the lack of logic in spatial relations and chronological sequence here offers rich associations for viewers. The bottom register shows the Massacre of the Innocents, in which Herod himself actively participates. Connected to it are the scenes of the advent of the Magi, their adoration of the baby Jesus, and their departure by a different route home, shown in the upper right- and left-hand corners. Scenes derived from apocryphal Gospels are depicted in the central portion of the icon.[3] Right above the massacre, Elizabeth hides with her son, John the Baptist, in a miraculously opened cave that allows them to escape Herod's soldier. Directly connected to the birth of Christ are the scenes immediately below the cave, where Christ is washed by the two midwives; in an unusual scene below at the viewer's left, Joseph's son (Joseph himself in the apocryphal texts) leads the two midwives to the cave.[4] The angel appears to Joseph just above this scene. At the center the midwives bathe the child, and, below this the Holy Family is shown entering Egypt. The family is accompanied by a son of Joseph and welcomed by a personification of the city of Alexandria.

The organization and selection of scenes form a densely packed and visually intense composition that narrates the early history of God as man.[5] The sources for the images in this icon may well have been manuscript illuminations, such as the eleventh-century Gospels in Paris (gr. 74), but in the late Byzantine period such arrangements became common in extensive monumental fresco cycles.[6]

CP

14, reverse

NOTES

1. From G. Sotiriou and M. G. Sotiriou 1956–59, vol. 2, pp. 59–62, with changes. Translated by Catie Mihalopoulos.
2. The iconography is extensively treated in Stichel 1990.
3. For example, Hennecke and Schneemelcher 1963–66, vol. 1, and Tischendorf 1876.
4. On this tradition, see Deshman 1989.
5. The icon was originally paired with another panel, *olim* Kiev, that together made up a diptych. That panel had scenes of the baptism of Christ and his temptation in the desert. Any full reading of the Nativity icon needs to take into account its equally rich complement, which exists only in black-and-white photographs. The pairing was noted in Weitzmann 1982b, p. 431 (annotations to no. VIII, p. 21 n. 5), and discussed more recently in Ermgof 2005, pp. 645–48.
6. See Drandaki 2002, pp. 24–35.

REFERENCES

G. Sotiriou and M. G. Sotiriou 1956–58, vol. 1, figs. 43–45, and vol. 2, pp. 59–62; Weitzmann et al. 1966, p. 13, pl. 23.

680.

15 Crucifixion with Deesis and Saints

ca. 1250s, Saint-Jean d'Acre or Sinai

Tempera and gold on panel

37.5 × 27.3 × 2.3 cm (14¾ × 10¾ × 15/16 in.)

INSCRIBED

On the *titulus*: Ι(ησοῦ)Σ Χ(ριστὸ)Σ Ο ΒΑCΙΛΕΥC ΤΗC ΔΟΞΗC (Jesus Christ, the King of Glory); top row: Ο ΗΡ(οφήτης) ΗΛΙΑC (Elijah); ΜΗ(τη)Ρ Θ(εο)Υ (Mother of God); Ι(ησοῦ)Σ Χ(ριστό)Σ (Jesus Christ); Ο ΑΓΙΟC Ιω(άννης) Ο ΠΡΟΔΡΟΜΟC (Saint John the Baptist); Ο ΠΡΟΦ(ήτης) ΜΟCΗC (Prophet Moses); left column: Ο ΑΓΙΟC ΠΕΤΡΟC (Saint Peter); Ο ΑΓΙΟC ΓΕΩΡΓΙΟC (Saint George); Ο Α(γιος) Ιω(άννης) Ο ΧΡ(υσόστομος) (Saint John Chrysostom); Η ΑΓΙΑ ΚΑΤΕΡΙΝΑ (Saint Catherine); bottom row: Ο ΑΓΙΟC ΜΑΞΙΜΟC (Saint Maximus the Confessor); Ο ΑΓΙΟC ΠΑΒΛΟC (Saint Paul of Thebes); Ο (ἅγιος) CΥΜΕΟΝ ΤΟΥ CΤΙΛΙΤΟΥ (Saint Symeon Stylites); Ο ΑΓΙΟC ΟΝΟΥΦΡΙΟC (Saint Onufrius); right column below Moses: Ο ΑΓΙΟC ΠΑΥΛΟC (Saint Paul); Ο ΑΓΙΟC ΘΕΩΔΩΡΟC (Saint Theodore); Ο ΑΓΙΟC ΒΑCΙΛΕΙΟC (Saint Basil); Η ΑΓΙΑ ΕΙΡΗΝΗ (Saint Irene); Ο (ἅγιος) ΔΟΜΕΝΤΙΟC (Saint Domitius)[1]

CONDITION

Entire surface of panel covered with gold leaf before painting. Paint films have flaked off to reveal gold background throughout. Uneven varnish. Painting has engaged frame with grooves running down entire right and left edges of panel. Fragment of wood in left groove suggests panel was once displayed in frame.

The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt

FRAMED BY BUST-LENGTH FIGURES of the Deesis (Christ, the Virgin Mary, and John the Baptist), the prophets Elijah and Moses, and thirteen other saints, this Crucifixion is central to discussions of painting in the thirteenth-century Mediterranean basin. This icon has been convincingly placed among manuscripts, icons, and frescoes produced by ateliers working in the Crusader capital at Acre in styles that combine aspects of Byzantine painting with Western iconography and style and are characterized by distinctive, bulging eyes.[2] Localized to Acre by a notation in a missal now in Perugia, their activity is dated to the middle of the thirteenth century by the presence of Louis IX of France in Acre between 1250 and 1254. (The most spectacular of the manuscripts, the Arsenal Bible, was probably made for Louis IX.)[3]

Among the works attributed to the atelier, our image finds a close match in the Crucifixion of the Perugia Missal.[4] The two share facial and hair types, the Virgin's gesture (turning her thumb up to her mouth), and Saint John's gesture (touching his eye and mouth). These motifs appear elsewhere, most significantly in the immense triptych made for the Franciscans at Perugia and in a double-sided icon on Sinai, as well as in other Crusader images.[5] The frantically mourning angels are also present in the double-sided icon and in Italian panel paintings and frescoes. Like chrysography, these shared motifs highlight the connections between Byzantine, Armenian, Italian, and Crusader painting. Still, the presence of the prophets Elijah and Moses and Saints Catherine, Symeon Stylites, and Onufrius, all venerated at Sinai, point to its association with the Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine at Sinai. Moreover, the two closest parallels for this framed Crucifixion are at Sinai. One is attributed to Constantinople just before 1200 (fig. 106);[6] the other, probably by another Acre painter, may have been inspired by our image.[7] Like the references among the saints, this familiarity with other Sinai images raises the possibility that some Acre painters were working in the vicinity of Saint Catherine's. At the very least, such images were intended for the veneration of—as well as at—the holy site, for preparation for pilgrimage there, or as votive gifts to the monastery.

RWC

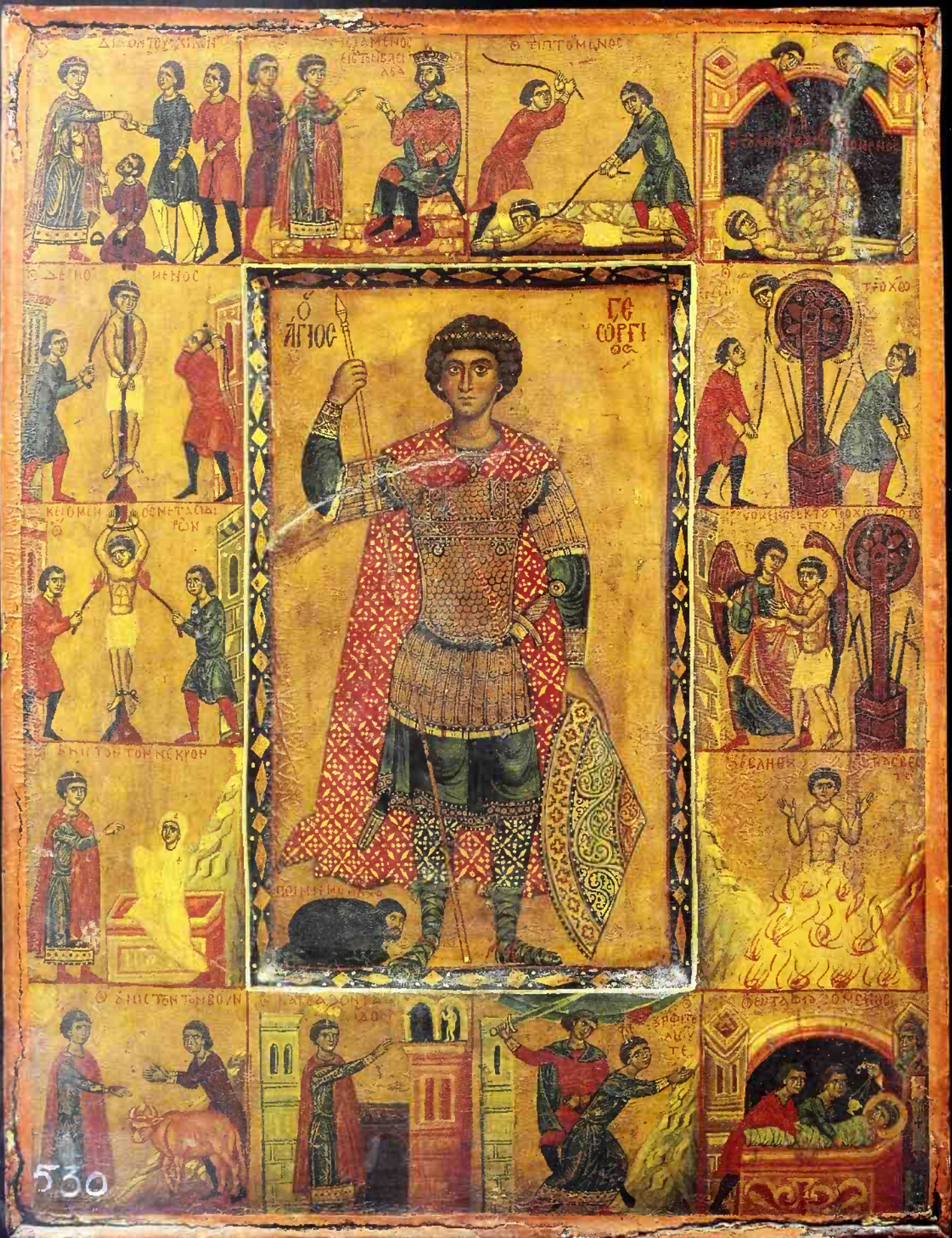
NOTES

1. Weitzmann et al. 1982, p. 202.
2. Folda 2005, pp. 282–336; Weitzmann 1963, pp. 179–203; Amy Neff in New York 2004, pp. 463–65, no. 274
3. Buchthal 1957, pp. 47–68. Helen C. Evans in New York 2004, pp. 462–63, no. 272.
4. Rebecca W. Corrie in New York 2004, pp. 466–67, no. 276.
5. Rebecca W. Corrie in New York 2004, pp. 481–82, no. 290; Jaroslav Folda in New York 2004, pp. 366–67, no. 223.
6. Annemarie Weyl Carr in New York 1997a, pp. 372–73, no. 245.
7. Folda 2005, pp. 535, 538, fig. 305.

REFERENCES

Weitzmann 1963, pp. 180–81, fig. 1; Weitzmann 1966b, pp. 56–58, fig. 3; Weitzmann et al. 1982, pp. 202, 211–14; Folda 2005, pp. 281–308, 535, 548, fig. 152.

Figure 106
Crucifixion with Deesis Surrounded by Saints, ca. 1200. Tempera on wood. The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt.



530

16 Saint George with Scenes from His Life

Early fifteenth century(?), Sinai(?)

Tempera and metal leaf with pigmented varnish on panel

44.1 × 33.4 × 2.5 cm (17⅜ × 13⅛ × 1 in.)

INSCRIBED

On center panel: Ο ΑΓΙΟC ΓΕΩΡΓΙΟC (Saint George); at bottom left: ΠΟΙΜΕΝ ΜΟΝΑΧΟC (Pimen the Monk); on outer frame, top: Ο Α(γιος) ΔΙΔΟΝ ΤΟ ΨΥΧΙΚΟΝ (The saint giving a pious donation); Ο Α(γιος) ΙCΤΑΜΕΝΟC ΕΙC ΤΟΝ ΒΑCΙΛΕΑ (The saint standing before the emperor); Ο Α(γιος) ΤΙΠΤΟΜΕΝΟC (The saint being beaten); Ο Α(γιος) ΛΙΘΟ ΒΑΡΙΝΟΜΕΝΟC (The saint being weighed down by a stone); on outer frame, right: Ο Α(γιος) ΕΝ ΤΟ ΤΡΟΧΩ (The saint on the wheel); Ο Α(γιος) ΡΥΟΜΕΝΟC ΕΚ ΤΟΥ ΤΡΟΧΟΥ ΥΠΟ ΤΟΥ ΑΓΓΕΛΟΥ (The saint being saved from the wheel by the angel); Ο Α(γιος) ΕΒΛΗΘΗ ΕΝ ΤΗ ΑCΒΕCΤΩ (The saint has been thrown into quicklime); on outer frame, left: Ο Α(γιος) ΔΕΡ-ΝΟΜΕΝΟC (The saint being flayed); Ο Α(γιος) ΚΕΙΟΜΕΝΟC ΜΕΤΑ CΙΔΗΡΩΝ (The saint being burned by irons); Ο Α(γιος) ΑΝΙCΤΩΝ ΤΟΝ ΝΕΚΡΟΝ (The saint raising the dead man); on outer frame, bottom: Ο Α(γιος) ΑΝΙCΤΩΝ ΤΟΝ ΒΟΥΝ (The saint raising the ox); Ο Α(γιος) ΚΑΤΕΑΖΩΝ ΤΑ ΕΙΔΩΛΑ (The saint destroying idols); Ο Α(γιος) ΞΙΦΙ ΤΕΛΕΙΟΥΤΕ (The saint is killed by a sword); Ο Α(γιος) ΕΝΤΑΦΙΑΖΟΜΕΝΟC (The saint being buried)

CONDITION

Uneven and discolored varnish layer(s), fine craqueleur over entire surface. Cleaning test on lower left removed uppermost layer(s) of varnish, revealing original surface. Halo of Saint George incised with double contour. Architectural details and figures incised loosely into background (often painted layers do not follow incision marks precisely). Frame is made up of strips of wood attached to panel; cracks appear at the interface at top and bottom. Crack in center of panel runs through the arm of Saint George.

The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt

THIS POPULAR MARTYR AND MILITARY SAINT,[1] revered by the Crusaders,[2] is depicted in the center of the panel in armor, wielding a lance and shield. A monk crouches in the gesture of supplication at his right foot, thus tying the icon to monastic patronage.[3] George's splendidly robust figure is offset by its miniature version depicted all around the frame, working miracles and suffering martyrdom in episodes of his life.[4] In these, his depiction varies in narrative context and gesture, thus challenging the magnified, central image and revealing its varied manifestations on the frame.[5] In this respect, narrative icons of saints force a reconsideration of their perceived static qualities. The juxtaposition of distinct images of George on the same panel reinforces the distinct visual identities a saint could assume on an icon, as in life.[6]

Narrative icons resemble templon beams, which usually depict a Deesis framed on either side by the liturgical life cycle of Christ.[7] Similarly, the monk on this icon visually enacts the process of witness and supplication, while the life cycle of George unfolds around them. This icon probably received special attention on George's feast day when the visualized life might have complemented the reading of his vita.[8] If placed in front of the iconostasis, it may have evoked the arrangement of the templon beam above and behind it and thus would have been a visual counterpart to the depiction of Christ himself.[9] The smaller scale of the narrative scenes invites the venerator to step closer, eliciting more intimate interaction with the panel. Narrative icons thus enhance the visual performance of devotion within the broader, architectural space of the church.

PC

NOTES

1. For a comprehensive survey of the textual tradition, cults, and depictions of Saint George and his life, see Mark-Weiner 1977. For the relative popularity of George on fresco cycles, see Gouma-Peterson 1985.
2. On Saint George in Crusader art, see Cormack and Mihalaras 1984. For military saints, see Walter 2003. For devotion to military saints during the Crusades, see Gerstel 2001. See also Hunt 1991.
3. G. Sotiriou and M. G. Sotiriou 1956–58, vol. 2, pp. 154–55. The Sotirious attribute the icon to monastic technique as well, claiming that the monk Pimen painted it, and identify him with the same figure that supplicates to Saint Nicholas on a fifteenth-century icon at the Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine at Sinai. The decoration on the border separating the frame from the center on this icon resembles that on the Nicholas icon, so the provenance of both from the same workshop is highly probable. Precedents exist for the monastic patronage of military saints such as George. A thirteenth-century narrative icon of the saint, located at Sinai, contains a depiction of John the Iberian, a monk and priest, and donor of the icon. See Mouriki 1995, no. 7.
4. On the corporeality of military saints in Byzantine art, see Maguire 1996, pp. 48–99.
5. Glenn Peers discusses the dialectics of center and frame and the saint's magnified presence vis-à-vis his brutalized body in relation to an icon of Saint George from Kastoria, now in the Byzantine Museum in Athens in Peers 2004, pp. 77–99.
6. Other narrative icons of Saint George combine different media; see New York 1997a, pp. 299–300, no. 202; Peers 2004, pp. 79–80.
7. N. P. Ševčenko 1992. On the "genre" of narrative icons, see N. P. Ševčenko 1999.
8. Unfortunately, little is known about the mechanics of the reading of "vitae," but a short reading from the *synaxarion* probably occurred on the specific saint's feast day.
9. The author is preparing a study of the physical space in which the narrative icons functioned in her Ph.D. dissertation (University of Chicago), titled "Narrating Sanctity: The Rhetoric of Representation in Byzantine and Italian Narrative Icons."

REFERENCES

G. Sotiriou and M. G. Sotiriou 1956–58, vol. 1, fig. 169, and vol. 2, pp. 154–55; Mark-Weiner 1977, pp. 81–82, fig. 53.

ΑΓΙΟΣ
ΝΙΚΟΛΑΟΣ

17 Saint Nicholas with Scenes from His Life

Thirteenth century, Sinai(?)

Tempera and gold over textile on panel

44.1 × 33.7 × 2.9 cm (17⅜ × 13⅝ × 1⅛ in.)

INSCRIBED

On center panel: Ο ΑΓΙΟC ΝΙΚΟΛΑΟC (Saint Nicholas); at bottom left: ΚΛΗΜΟC (Klimos); right: ΠΗΜΗΝ (Pimen); inner frame: each episode of Nicholas's life; outer frame: names of the saints

CONDITION

Excellent condition. Figures painted directly on white preparation layer. Cut gold leaf applied for costume details. Halos incised into gilded background. Frame is made up of strips of wood attached to panel. Horizontal cracks have developed along interface of strips with panel. Textile appears to go over front edge of frame. Frame was painted black, then gilded; now covered with layers of blue and red paint.

The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt

SAINT NICHOLAS'S INTERCESSORY POWERS were renowned in Byzantium.[1] Appropriately, this icon amplifies the themes of intercession and supplication within the specific context of Sinai.[2] The central portrait positions Nicholas between Christ and the Virgin, who, by anointing him, attest to his sanctity. Two monks—Klimos and Pimen—the probable donors of the icon, appear on either side of Nicholas in an attitude of prayer.[3] Their gesture, along with the depiction of Nicholas's life, furnishes an ideal for a monk to aspire to, if not in literal terms, then in the saint's assimilation to Christ represented directly above Nicholas. There, echoing the scene below, we see Christ enthroned between the Virgin Paraklesis[4] and John the Baptist in the format of the Deesis, the symbol of witness and supplication.[5] The saints on either side expand the Deesis and include Moses, Aaron, and Elijah. This firmly ties the supplication of the monks Klimos and Pimen to Sinai; they are depicted in eternal time with holy figures from the past, but the site they occupy is specifically referenced. The figures from the past attest to the life of Saint Nicholas, unfolding on the inner frame, just as they attest to the presence of Christ at the top of the panel. Nicholas, in spite of his magnified presence in the center, ultimately takes his place amid this august company.

This panel elaborates on the narrative icon format that scholars believe developed both in Byzantium and the Latin West around the thirteenth century and probably had its origins at Sinai.[6] It borrows extensively from an earlier icon of Nicholas's life located in the Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine at Sinai,[7] which suggests that it may have been created in the monastery itself, hence its emphasis on figures connected to Sinai. The interaction of the center and the frames enables different thematic relationships between its parts.[8] Like the components of an iconostasis, this icon yields a range of visual possibilities through its juxtaposition of portraits and narratives.

PC

NOTES

1. Saint Nicholas is a composite of two different saints—a fourth-century bishop of Myra and Nicholas of Sion. For a life of Nicholas of Sion, see Anrich 1913–17. See also Halkin 1957 for a list of hagiographic texts on Nicholas. For homiletic literature, see Ehrhard 1937–40. Nicholas's success in intercession is well documented by a sixth-century text known as the *Praxis de Stratelatis*, dated by Anrich to the reign of Justinian. For a comprehensive account of the life of Saint Nicholas as depicted in works of art and a discussion of textual sources, see N. P. Ševčenko 1983.
2. The exact location of the icon in the monastery is unclear since the chapel of Saint Nicholas is now covered by the chapel of Moses and Aaron. N. P. Ševčenko 1983, p. 164.
3. G. Sotiriou and M. G. Sotiriou 1956–58, vol. 2, pp. 155–57. The Sotirious argue that the monks were also the painters of the icon. Although their inscribed names may indicate their status as patrons of the panel, there is little concrete evidence to suggest that the monks actually painted it themselves.
4. G. Sotiriou and M. G. Sotiriou 1956–58, vol. 2, p. 156. Mouriki 1968; Walter 1980.
5. Literature on the Deesis is burgeoning. For a review, see Cutler 2000.
6. N. P. Ševčenko refers to this format as a convenient vehicle for the depiction of saints venerated by diverse ethnic, linguistic, and religious groups during the Crusader period of the thirteenth century. See N. P. Ševčenko 1999, pp. 162–65. For details on the Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine at Sinai as an important center of icon production in the early thirteenth century, see Weitzmann 1984b.
7. G. Sotiriou and M. G. Sotiriou 1956–58, vol. 2, pp. 155–57. N. P. Ševčenko furnishes details on the earlier icon, which she dates to the late twelfth century. See N. P. Ševčenko 1983, pp. 29–31.
8. For a subtle reading of the relations between center and frame and how they might inflect the subject matter of an icon, see Carr 1993–94.

REFERENCES

G. Sotiriou and M. G. Sotiriou 1956–58, vol. 1, fig. 170, and vol. 2, pp. 155–57; N. P. Ševčenko 1983, p. 59, fig. 42.

18 Polyptych with Feast Scenes

Fourteenth century

Tempera and metal leaf (probably gold) on panel

Each panel, respectively:
36 × 27.3 × 1.4 cm (14 3/16 × 10 3/4 × 9/16 in.)
35.9 × 27.6 × 1.4 cm (14 1/8 × 10 7/8 × 9/16 in.)
36 × 28.2 × 1.4 cm (14 3/16 × 11 1/8 × 9/16 in.)
35.9 × 27 × 1.4 cm (14 1/8 × 10 5/8 × 9/16 in.)

INSCRIBED

Panel 1: top left: Ο ΧΕΡΕΤΙCΜΟC (The Annunciation); ΑΡΧ(άγγελος) ΓΑΒΡΙΗΛ (Archangel Michael); ΜΗ(τη)Ρ Θ(εο)Υ (Mother of God); top right: Η Χ(ριστο)Γ ΓΕΝΙCΙC (The Birth of Christ); bottom left: Η ΑΠΟΚΑΘΗΛΩCΙC (The Unnailing); Ι(ησοῦ)C Χ(ριστό)C (Jesus Christ); ΜΗΤ(η)Ρ Θ(εο)Υ (Mother of God); bottom right: Ο ΕΝΤΑΦΙ(ος) ΘΡΗΝΟ[ς] (The Lamentation over the tomb); Ι(ησοῦ)C Χ(ριστό)C (Jesus Christ)

Panel 2: top left: Η ΥΠΑΠΑΝΤΗ (The meeting); ΜΗ(τη)Ρ Θ(εο)Υ (Mother of God); top right: Η ΒΑΠΤΙCΙC (The Baptism); bottom left: Η ΑΝΑC-ΤΑCΙC (The Anastasis); Ι(ησοῦ)C Χ(ριστό)C (Jesus Christ); bottom right: Η ΜΕΤΑΜΟΡΦΩCΙC (The Transfiguration); Ι(ησοῦ)C Χ(ριστό)C (Jesus Christ)

Panel 3: top left: Η ΕΓΕΡCΙC ΤΟΥ ΛΑΖΑΡΟΥ (Resurrection of Lazarus); Ι(ησοῦ)C Χ(ριστό)C (Jesus Christ); top right: Η ΒΑΪΟΦΟΡΟ(ς) (Carrying palms); Ι(ησοῦ)C Χ(ριστό)C (Jesus Christ); bottom left: Η ΑΝΑΛΗΨΙC (Ascension); bottom right: Η ΠΕΝΤΗΚΟCΤΗ (Pentecost)

Panel 4: top left: ΕΛΚΩΜΕΝ(ος) ΕΙΠ CΤΑΥΡΟΥ (Being dragged to the cross); Ι(ησοῦ)C Χ(ριστό)C (Jesus Christ); top right: Η CΤΑΥΡΩCΙC (Crucifixion); ΜΗ(τη)Ρ Θ(εο)Υ (Mother of God); Ι(ησοῦ)C Χ(ριστό)C (Jesus Christ); Ο Α(γι)ος Ιω(άννης) (Saint John); bottom left: Η ΚΙΜΗ(σις) ΤΙC Θ(εοτό)ΚΟΥ (The Dormition of the Mother of God); Ι(ησοῦ)C Χ(ριστό)C (Jesus Christ); ΜΗ(τη)Ρ Θ(εο)Υ (Mother of God) bottom right: Ο Α(γι)ος ΓΕΩΡΓΙΟC (Saint George); Ο Α(γι)ος ΔΙΜΙΤΡΙΟC (Saint Demetrios)

CONDITION

Paint layer in excellent condition overall. Scattered losses to surface reveal white preparation layer beneath. Thin varnish layer only slightly yellowed. Lower right corner of reverse of panel has female figure drawn in black and red liquid medium. Engaged frame; arched border of each image also carved out of panel. Panels presently held together with three eye-hooks along edges.

The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt

POLYPTYCHS WITH MULTIPLE FEAST SCENES are well attested at the Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine at Sinai. A four-panel icon from the twelfth century represents the twelve major feasts of the year, the Dodekaorton: Annunciation, Nativity, Presentation in the Temple, Baptism, Transfiguration, Resurrection of Lazarus, Entry into Jerusalem, Crucifixion, Anastasis, Ascension, Pentecost, and Dormition of the Mother of God.[1] By the fourteenth century, this series had become canonical and appears on a miniature mosaic icon in Florence, a polyptych with six wings at Sinai, and other icons at the monastery.[2] By encapsulating the program of the templon beam (see, for example, cat. no. 20), such portable icons render any space sacred and could have been employed in chapels of the monastery or the surrounding area.

To the traditional Dodekaorton, some icons add other scenes. A late Byzantine icon of the Crucifixion at the monastery also includes additional events of Holy Week, the period in which the icon would have had special significance.[3] The tetraptych shown here has a similar emphasis through the inclusion of the scenes of Christ dragged to Calvary (panel 4, top left), the Descent

18, panel 1, detail with Lamentation

18, panel 1, reverse, detail with drawing of veiled woman

from the Cross (panel 1, bottom left), and the Lamentation (panel 1, bottom right) and concludes with the most popular saints of the day, George and Demetrios (panel 4, bottom right). In this narrative, the Transfiguration (panel 2, bottom right) follows not the Baptism, as is traditional, but the Anastasis and precedes the Ascension (panel 3, bottom left), perhaps to underscore the notion of *metamorphosis*, the Greek name for the Transfiguration. But there is also an important visual relationship established between the upper and lower scenes in this panel, so the Baptism and the Transfiguration share the same composition. At both events, Christ's divinity was made manifest.

In the first panel (see page 162), the two supplementary scenes to the Dodekaorton in the lower register are artfully inserted into the narrative. Mary, who normally is at the left in the Descent from the Cross (see, for example, cat. no. 19), has been shifted to the right to parallel visually her position in the Annunciation above and the Lamentation at the right. To associate the Lamentation with the Descent, the painter repeated the angel in the sky, the ladder, and, especially, the dead body of Christ. By the unusual diagonal position of the swaddled infant and the tomblike manger above, Jesus's birth visually anticipates his death, an antithesis evoked in Good Friday rituals[4] and graphically defined in the small diptych with the Virgin Hodegetria and the Descent from the Cross (see cat. no. 19).

A delicate drawing on the back of the first panel, shown here, offers a rare glimpse of the process of creating an icon, for it is a study in reverse for the figure of the Virgin at the Descent. Black and red brushstrokes gracefully sketch a veiled woman reaching toward something. In the final version on the front, Mary bends forward to her son, and her gesture aids the removal of his body. Although drawings as a finished art form began to appear in Palaeologan manuscripts,[5] preparatory sketches for icons are rare[6]—hence the importance of this heretofore-unpublished detail.

RSN

NOTES

1. G. Sotiriou and M. G. Sotiriou 1956–58, vol. 1, figs. 76–79.
2. Weitzmann 1982a, pp. 74–75; G. Sotiriou and M. G. Sotiriou 1956–58, vol. 1, figs. 214–17, 220.
3. G. Sotiriou and M. G. Sotiriou 1956–58, vol. 1, fig. 205.
4. Maguire 1981, pp. 91–108.
5. Velmans 1974.
6. Nelson 1981.

REFERENCES

G. Sotiriou and M. G. Sotiriou 1956–58, vol. 1, figs. 208–13, and vol. 2, pp. 189–90; Weitzmann 1982a, pp. 22–23, 78–79.

18 (opposite), panel 2, detail

ΥΠΑΠΑΝΤΗ
ΜΡΘΥ
Η ΒΑΠΤΙ CIC
ΑΝΑCΤΑCIC
ΜΕΤΑ ΜΟΡΦΩ CIC

ΜΡ ΘΥ
ΙC ΧC
ΗΑΠΟΚΑ
ΘΗΛΩC
ΙC
ΧC
ΜΡ ΘΥ

19 Diptych with the Virgin Hodegetria and the Descent from the Cross

ca. 1400, Constantinople(?)

Tempera and metal leaf (probably gold) on panel

Combined panels: 24.8 × 38.7 × 1.4 cm (9¾ × 15¼ × 9/16 in.)

INSCRIBED

On left wing: ΜΗ(τη)Ρ Θ(εο)Υ (Mother of God); Ι(ησοῦ)C Χ(ριστό)C (Jesus Christ); Η ΟΔΗΓΗΤΡΙΑ (The Guide); on right wing: Η ΑΠΟΚΑΘΗΛΩCΙC (The Unnailing); ΜΗ(τη)Ρ Θ(εο)Υ (Mother of God); Ι(ησοῦ)C Χ(ριστό)C (Jesus Christ); on the titulus: Ο Β(α)C(ι)Λ(εὺς) Τ(ῆς) Δ(ό)Ξ(ης) (The King of Glory)

CONDITION

Very good condition. Halos of Virgin and Child have been incised in metal leaf, while contoured halos on facing image have been painted. Rounded edges to paint losses indicate adhesion problem between pigment and panels, while fire caused loss of pigment and support in the right panel (see reverse, below).

The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt

THIS SMALL DIPTYCH JOINS IMAGES of Christ at the beginning and end of his earthly life. At the left is the Virgin Hodegetria, clearly labeled and holding the child at the right, unlike in earlier images (cat. nos. 8, 9). The delicate facial features, gracefully elongated fingers, and bulbous head of the child are mannerisms of Byzantine painting in the last decades of the empire, a style continued by Russian icon painters.[1]

At the right, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus take down the dead Christ, as Mary, accompanied by mourning women, embraces her son. Joseph, "rich" and "respected" (MATT. 27:57; MARK 15:43), is the elder man standing beside the cross. Nicodemus kisses Jesus's hand, as another man removes the nails binding the feet. The standard title for the scene in Byzantine art, "The Unnailing," calls attention to the task being performed, but the artist has instead focused on Mary's tender response to her dead son. On the polyptych with feast scenes (cat. no. 18), Joseph on his ladder has greater prominence, but on the diptych he defers to the grieving mother and her child, who alone have prominent golden halos. Mary delicately rests her left hand on Jesus' shoulder; her face registers the horror of his death. Her dark garments reveal, in contrast, Jesus' bare torso, the thematic center of the scene.

Earlier representations of the Descent emphasized Joseph's efforts to lift the body from the cross,[2] but from the late twelfth century, monastic services for Good Friday and Holy Saturday encouraged greater attention to Mary's grief and prompted the creation of new images, such as the Man of Sorrows.[3] Like a fourteenth-century diptych of the Virgin and the Man of Sorrows that is documented at such liturgies, the Sinai panels were probably employed at these nocturnal rites.[4] Was this when it was damaged by a candle (see detail of reverse, below)? According to monastic statutes, the person responsible would have performed penance for allowing a candle to drip wax on liturgical objects, much less to burn a holy icon.[5] Such a small portable icon, with no known associations with others at the Sinai, may have been the gift of a pilgrim, one who presumably came for the Holy Week liturgies.

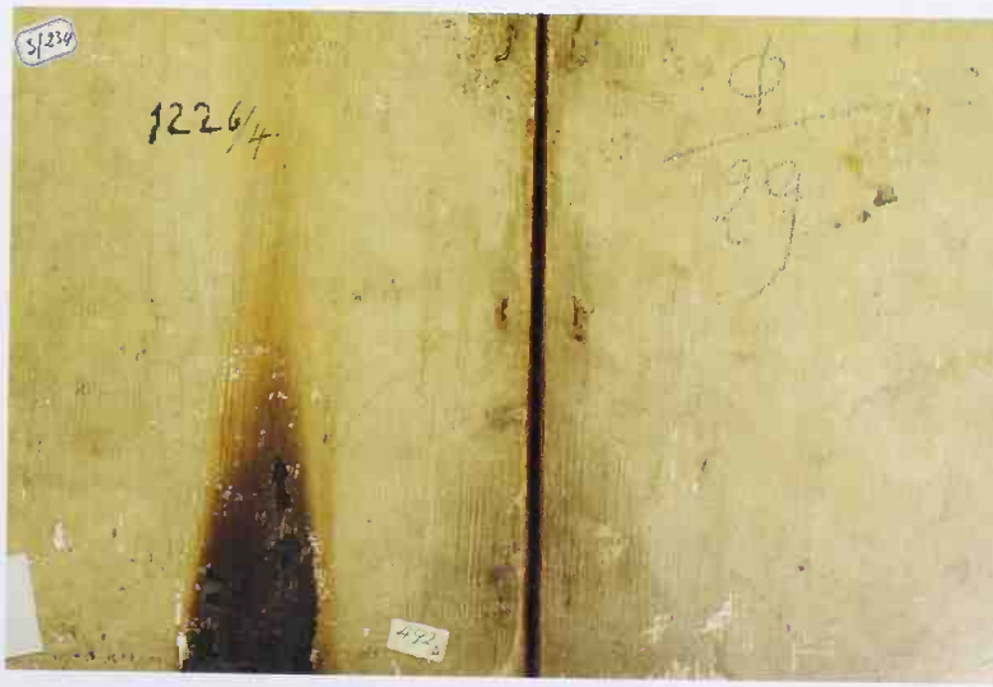
RSN

NOTES

1. G. Sotiriou and M. G. Sotiriou 1956–58, vol. 2, p. 205. See also Virgin Hodegetria of Smolensk from the beginning of the fifteenth century in Saltykov 1981, fig. 13.
2. On the Descent, see Millet 1916, pp. 467–88.
3. Belting 1980–81.
4. Of similar date and perhaps function is an icon in Cyprus with the Virgin on one side and the Descent from the Cross on the other: *Byzantine Museum* 1983, p. 47, fig. 11.
5. Featherstone and Holland 1982, p. 260.

REFERENCES

G. Sotiriou and M. G. Sotiriou 1956–58, vol. 1, fig. 234, and vol. 2, pp. 204–5; N. Chatzidakis 2002, pp. 342–45, no. 126.



19, reverse, detail

ΑΓΙΛΕΙΟΣ
*ΠΟΣΧΕΣΚΕ
ΙΥΧΕΟΘΕΗ
ΜΩΝ·ΕΞΑΠ
ΟΥΚΑΤΗΚΗ
ΤΗΡΙΟΥΣΥ·

HOLY SPACE

A Byzantine church and a modern museum are spaces set off from the ordinary world. One has icons, the other art—entities that are similar but not the same. Art enobles and enhances its viewing spaces and the lives of its beholders. A beautiful icon has a similar effect, but all icons, whether or not beautiful, lead beyond themselves and make the divine present in the church. Like the liturgy, they are remembrance and representation, and when assembled into ordered sequences, icons create a visual hierarchy that defines the viewer's place in the continuum from earth to heaven.

Icons were displayed in the medieval church on special stands and especially on the templon screen that still separates the altar from the nave. At Sinai the calendar icons, hanging on the columns of the nave, link the days of the months to images of saints; they sacralize time. Iconic images also appear on ritual objects, clerical vestments, and the pages of liturgical manuscripts and provide a focus for devotion and models of spiritual leadership.

Figure 107 (opposite)
Saint Basil with Liturgical Scroll, ca. 1200 (detail, cat. no. 26).

20 Epistyle with Twelve Feast Scenes

Twelfth century, Cyprus or Sinai

Tempera and gold over fine textile ground on panel[1]

Panel 1. ANNUNCIATION, NATIVITY, PRESENTATION IN THE TEMPLE
44.1 × 118.3 × 3.1 cm (17 3/8 × 46 9/16 × 1 3/16 in.)

Panel 2. BAPTISM, TRANSFIGURATION, RAISING OF LAZARUS
45.1 × 114.9 × 3.2 cm (17 3/4 × 45 1/4 × 1 1/4 in.)

Panel 3. ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM, CRUCIFIXION, ANASTASIS
44.8 × 118.4 × 3.5 cm (17 5/8 × 46 5/8 × 1 3/8 in.)

Panel 4. ASCENSION, PENTECOST, DORMITION OF THE VIRGIN
40 × 108.9 × 3.1 cm (15 3/4 × 42 7/8 × 1 3/16 in.)

CONDITION
Blue overpainting of gilded background removed, as seen in cleaning strip on panels; extensive abrasion to both gilded and painted surfaces. Vertical incisions define columns in composition. The wooden inserts later introduced to top of panels were probably added to repair damage caused by hardware and mounting. Engaged frames; frame on panel 4 reduced along top and bottom edges.

The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt

20, panel 1

THESE FOUR PANELS JOIN TOGETHER to form a broad templon epistyle—a horizontal beam that crowned the sanctuary screen in many medieval Byzantine churches. In its earliest manifestation, the beam's frontal portraits of saints, the Virgin, and Christ visually complemented and facilitated intercessional prayers recited during the service. Beginning in at least the eleventh century, painters decorated the epistyle with narrative scenes from the life of Christ that correspond to the major feast days of the Orthodox calendar.[2] On the Sinai epistyle these are the Annunciation, the Nativity, the Presentation in the Temple, the Baptism, the Transfiguration, the Raising of Lazarus, the Entry into Jerusalem, the Crucifixion, the Anastasis, the Ascension, the Pentecost, and the Dormition of the Virgin. Placed on the sanctuary barrier, the narrative duplicated monumental representations on the walls of most churches, but—it should be emphasized—not in the Sinai basilica, which lacks the frescoes or mosaics of a typical Byzantine church. Framing views of the altar, the painted beam also formed an immediate backdrop for the priest as he stood below it at the threshold of the sanctuary and read from the Gospels or service books concerning the represented moments in the life of Christ.

This is the earliest templon beam to have survived from Sinai. Judging from the width of the combined panels, 4.6 m (15 ft.), the beam may have decorated the screen in front of the main sanctuary of the church; the broad dimensions

20, panel 2

prohibit the placement of this beam in any of the side chapels.[3] It is unknown when this element of the screen would have been dismantled, but the surfaces of the panels are abraded, and the right edge of panel 4 is trimmed, suggesting that the epistyle had fallen out of use, possibly when a new screen was designed for this location.[4]

Kurt Weitzmann, who most intensively studied these panels, attributed them to the hand of a Cypriot painter on the basis of close stylistic parallels with the church of the Panagia Phorbiotissa at Asinou (dated 1105–6) and with Sinai Codex 208, a lectionary that has been dated to the middle or third quarter of the twelfth century and attributed to an illuminator from Cyprus (cat. no. 34).[5]

SEJG

NOTES

1. In recent times, according to Kurt Weitzmann, two of the panels were located in the chapel of Constantine and Helena; two others were placed in the chapel of Saint George on top of a tower on the north wall of the monastery. Weitzmann 1984b, pp. 65–66
2. See, for example, the typicon of Gregory Pakourianos for the Monastery of the Mother of God Petritzonitissa in Bačkovo, dated December 1083; J. Thomas and Hero 2000, vol. 2, pp. 536, 552. For collected sources, see Spieser 1999
3. Measuring off of Forsyth's plan, the width of the sanctuary opening is approximately 5.5 m (18 ft.)
4. Scholars have recently begun to assemble a screen from icons of the thirteenth century. See Drandaki 2004, p. 38, figs. 2.4, 2.5.
5. See Weitzmann 1975; Weitzmann and Galavaris 1990, pp. 9–10, 166–70, pl. 27, figs. 645–47

REFERENCES

G. Sotiriou and M. G. Sotiriou 1956–58, vol. 1, figs. 87–94, and vol. 2, pp. 99–104; Lazarev 1964–65, pp. 132–33, pl. 36, fig. 12; Weitzmann 1975; Weitzmann, M. Chatzidakis, and Radojčić 1980, p. 23, figs. 49–53; Weitzmann 1984b, pp. 64–67, figs. 1–2.

20. panel 3

20, panel 1, detail with Presentation in the Temple

20, panel 4

21 Epistyle with the Miracles of Saint Eustratios

Second or third quarter of the twelfth century

Tempera and gold on panel

Panel 1: 34.8 × 136.2 × 3.4 cm
(13 11/16 × 53 5/8 × 1 5/16 in.);
panel 2: 34.4 × 139.1 × 2.9 cm
(13 9/16 × 54 3/4 × 1 1/8 in.)

INSCRIBED

Panel 1: Ὁ ἅ(γιος) Ευ(σ)τρατιος ηρμενος την υπο εκτικου πιρετου κατεχωμενι(ν) (Saint Eustratios curing the [woman] suffering from a persistent fever); Ὁ ἅ[γιος] Ευ(σ)τρατης εξιπνιζων τον [. . .] εν το ναω τουτο προς τους εοθινους υμνους (Saint Eustratios awakening the [. . .] in this church for morning hymns); Ευ(σ)τρατιος θεραπεβων τον μενομε(νον) κε τας σαρκας αυτου κατεσθιοντων δια των αυτου λιψανον τον εντευθα (Saint Eustratios healing the [man who was] mad and devouring his own flesh, through his relics there); Ὁ ἅ(γιος) Ευ(σ)τρατιος ηρμενος την υπο μι(ε)τριτεου κατεχωμενον δια της αυτου εφανίας (Saint Eustratios curing the [woman] suffering from metritis [uterine infection], by his appearance); Ὁ ἅ(γιος) Ευ(σ)τρατηος ηρμενος τον φρενιτ|ιζ|οντ(α) δια των αυτου λεψανων (Saint Eustratios curing the [man with] phrenitis [brain fever] through his relics); [ΙC] ΧC ὁ ἅ(γιος) Ιω(άννης) ὁ [Πρόδρομος] (Christ, Saint John);
panel 2: Η πεδες σιμεωντ(ες) [. . .] τουτο τη αγια εορτη (The youths [beating the] semantron at this holy feast[?]); ηνιοντες [. . .] οι [. . .] τουτου εομ[1]; Ὁ ἅ(γιος) Ευστρατιος ηρμενος την θεγάτερα της σηνκλιτικης (Saint Eustratios curing the daughter of Synkletike [or the Senator's wife]); [Ὁ ἅγιος Εὐσ]τρατιος ηρμενος [. . .]αν μὀναχὴ(ν) (Saint Eustratios curing the [. . .] nun); Η ἅγι(οι) πεντε θεραπεβοντες τὴν ἀφωνον κε ἀκἄνιτῶν (The Holy Five healing the mute and paralyzed [woman]); Ὁ ἅ(γιος) Ευ(σ)τρατιος ηρμενος τον υπο τετἀνοῦ εχομενον (Saint Eustratios curing the [man] suffering from tetanus)

CONDITION

Painted parts of composition directly over preparation layer. Incised and burnished disks on engaged frame placed above and below each scene and between joins of arches. Incisions used to place columns in composition and create fine detail on capitals and base of each column. Halos are also incised and appear to have been drawn with compass. Minor retouching to edges of frame in red bole color; outer edges painted black-blue. Larger losses filled with wax.

The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine,
Sinai, Egypt

21, panel 1

21, panel 2, detail

THIS EPISTYLE, OR ICONOSTASIS BEAM—consisting of a pair of connected horizontal panels—is primarily devoted to the posthumous miracles of Saint Eustratios, an Armenian martyr of the time of Diocletian. In three cases, Eustratios performs the miracle in conjunction with his own relics, which are contained in a golden box. In one case, he is assisted by his four fellow martyrs, Mardarios, Auxentios, Eugenios, and Orestes. These popular saints, known collectively as the Five Martyrs of Sebasteia, or the Holy Five, are represented as a group in countless church programs.[2] But scenes of their martyrdom are rare, and their posthumous miracles are attested solely by this one work of art.[3]

Each miracle is treated here as an independent unit; most involve extremely specific and urgent medical ailments: fever, madness, brain fever, uterine infection, and tetanus. Eustratios, who is larger in scale than the other figures, performs each miracle with the identical gesture of benediction; the reliquary box, held by an elderly custodian (a priest?), touches the ailing person, not Eustratios himself. The healings regularly take place in a space resembling a church courtyard.[4] The economic level of the patients seems to be quite high: several of the male participants wear white caps with dangling ribbons, some also a long coat like a caftan over a tunic.[5] The women wear wide white headdresses and earrings.

Weitzmann attributed the beam to the circle of the early-twelfth-century Cypriot painter of the twelve feasts epistyle (cat. no. 20). However, some aspects of the style of the Eustratios beam point to a date later in the century: for example, the soft pastel salmon garments and the golden disks that adorn the border and spandrels of the arches that separate the scenes. The back of the icon is painted with wavy red and black lines.

21, panel 2

There is no evidence for the existence of relics of Saint Eustratios on Mount Sinai in this period. A chapel of the Holy Five exists within the monastery walls, but its age is unclear.[6] The references to the saint's relics and the nature of his clientele imply an origin for the miracle cycle not on Sinai but in a proper sanctuary of the Holy Five, probably Arauraka, in the area of Trebizond, the five martyrs' place of burial and a known pilgrimage site.[7] Why these miracles should have been represented on Sinai remains an enigma, but it does suggest some connection of the monastery with the Black Sea region in the twelfth century.

NPŠ

21, panel 1, detail

NOTES

1. The words are too fragmentary to allow for reconstruction. Scenes 7 and 8 are possibly connected, if we take the man in the window in scene 7 to be the same as the man standing before the mounted Eustratios in scene 8. Note his horse's carefully rendered horseshoes.
2. Weitzmann 1979; T. Chatzidakis-Bacharas 1982, pp. 74–81.
3. The written texts, including the hymnography for December 13, their feast day, are concerned exclusively with the saints' Passion and martyrdom. Miracle collections with a strong emphasis on posthumous healings do exist for other saints—e.g., those of Artemios (seventh century) and Luke of Steiris (tenth century), but for none of these is there a painted cycle devoted to the miracles.
4. The patients were apparently brought by relatives to Saint Eustratios's sanctuary; there they were laid out on beds to await his miraculous appearance.
5. Compare the costume of John Protospatharios in an Armenian Gospel book in Venice, Mekhitarist Library, S. Lazzaro, cod. 887, fol. 8; Spatharakis 1976, fig. 25; and the portraits of Theodore Gabras and his wife in Saint Petersburg 291, fols. 2v–3r; Spatharakis 1976, figs. 27–28. Eustratios himself wears this same white cap with ribbons in several Cappadocian churches.
6. Manafis 1990, p. 57, fig. 26. According to Doula Mouriki, the dimensions of the chapel match those of the beam, but the chapel itself may well have been constructed to house the beam. The only other surviving iconostasis beam depicting the life of a saint is one of Nicholas, also at Sinai; N. P. Ševčenko 1983, pp. 31, 33, and p. 196, figs. 5.2, 5.3. The horizontal format of the Eustratios beam and its emphasis on healings differentiates it from the so-called vita icons that first appeared on Mount Sinai in the early thirteenth century.
7. On the site, see Bryer and Winfield 1985, vol. 1, pp. 163–77; Rosenqvist 2002, pp. 193–94.

REFERENCES

G. Sotiriou and M. G. Sotiriou 1956–58, vol. 1, figs. 103–11, and vol. 2, pp. 109–10; Weitzmann 1975, pp. 52–53, pl. 20; Weitzmann 1979, pp. 108–10, figs. 28–29; Weitzmann 1984b, pp. 67–68; Mouriki 1990, pp. 106, 152–53, figs. 20–22; Vokotopoulos 1995, no. 38; Yuri Piatnitsky in Saint Petersburg and London 2000, pp. 246–50, no. 861.

21, panel 1, reverse

ΑΡΧΑΓΓΕΛΟΣ ΓΑΒΡΙΗΛ
ΘΕΟΤΟΚΟΣ ΜΡ ΘΥ

22 Sanctuary Doors with the Annunciation

Early thirteenth century, Sinai

Silver-colored metal leaf with pigmented varnish over textile and panel

125.4 × 41 × 3.8 cm (49⅜ × 16⅛ × 1½ in.)

INSCRIBED
Obverse: ΧΑΙΡΕΤΙϹΜΟϹ (Annunciation); Ο ΑΡΧ(άγγελος) ΓΑΒΡΙΗΛ (The archangel Gabriel); ΜΗ(τη)Ρ Θ(εο)Υ (Mother of God); reverse: Ι(ησου)Ϲ Χ(ριστό)Ϲ (Jesus Christ)

CONDITION
For Gabriel, the contour of the robe, wing, and neck has been incised into gold, under paint. Extensive abrasion to Virgin's drapery. Loss in the shoulder of Virgin, located above metal hardware. Burnished disks throughout gilded background. Extensive loss to original surface at top of both doors, minor loss at bottom. Varnish layer(s) thick, uneven, and very discolored.

The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt[1]

NOTES
1. The doors are located today in the Lower Panagia Chapel.
2. Saint Petersburg and London 2000, pp. 236–37, no. 155.
3. See Constas 2006.

REFERENCE
Weitzmann 1964–65, pp. 17–18, fig. 13.

OF THE MANY PORTALS WITHIN the Byzantine church, the most important was the main entrance to the sanctuary. It was at this sacred threshold, at the center of the templon screen, that the curved panels decorated with the scene of the Annunciation were located. This is the later of two pairs of low, medieval doors representing this critical subject (see fig. 108 for the earlier pair).[2] The painter has placed the archangel and the Virgin at the outer limits of the panels in order to heighten the drama of Gabriel's revelation to Mary that, though chaste, she would conceive a son. Although the Virgin appears to retreat from the angel, raising her hand defensively, the tooled circles that appear to radiate from the Virgin seem to convey a different response; they visually enhance the mystical significance of the event and silently acknowledge that the angel's prophecy has been realized.

The placement of the Virgin on the sanctuary gate accords with the metaphorical understanding of the Mother of God as a portal in Byzantine hymnography. In the Akathistos Hymn, for example, the Virgin is called the "gate of sublime mystery," "gateway of salvation," and "key to the doors of paradise." In the late Byzantine period Symeon of Thessaloniki calls her "the Heavenly Gate" and the "Living Temple and Gate of God."[3] The representation of the Annunciation at the threshold of the sanctuary further visualized the dogmatic link between the moment of incarnation (i.e., Christ's assumption of human flesh within the womb of his mother) and his liturgical incarnation during the eucharistic rite. Once accepted into the mystical program of the decorated church, the Annunciation became the most frequently represented scene on the gates to the sanctuary. At the celebration of the Annunciation on March 25, the passage from Exodus about the Burning Bush was read. This association would have increased the significance of the Annunciation for the Sinai monks.

The thirteenth-century date of these two panels rests on stylistic comparison to other representations of the Annunciation. The rigid folds of the garments, fleshy faces and necks, and refined gestures fit well with thirteenth-century depictions of the scene in monumental painting. The interior of the gates was decorated at a much later date with a cross (see reverse of doors, this page), a symbol that was commonly painted on the reverse side of panels at Sinai and one that is frequently included on the reverse side of icons placed within the templon screen.

SEJG

22, reverse

Figure 108
Sanctuary Doors with the Annunciation, late twelfth century. Tempera and metal leaf on textile and panel, 120 × 64.5 × 2 cm (47¼ × 25⅜ × ¾ in.). The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt.

23 Sanctuary Doors with Moses and Aaron

ca. 1200–1250, Sinai

Tempera and silver-colored metal leaf with pigmented varnish on panel

Left wing: 127.3 × 36.2 × 3.1 cm (50⅛ × 14¼ × 1³⁄₁₆ in.);
right wing: 127.3 × 35.2 × 3.3 cm (50⅛ × 13⅞ × 1⅜ in.)

INSCRIBED

On obverse: Μ(ω)CH(ς) ([The prophet] Moses); Ο ΠΡΟ(φήτης) ΑΡΩΝ (The prophet Aaron); on Aaron's scroll: Ο ΠΡΟΦΗ(της) ΑΑΡΡΩΝ (The prophet Aaron); ΠΡΟΦΗΤΗ(ς) ΑΑΡΩΝ (The prophet Aaron); on reverse: Ο ΕΥΑΓΕΛΙΣ(σ)ΜΟ(ς) (The Annunciation); Ο ΠΡΟΦΗΤΗ(ς) ΜΩΥCΗC (The prophet Moses); Ο ΠΡΟΦΗΤΗ(ς) ΑΑΡΩΝ (The prophet Aaron); on Ark: Μ(ήτη)Ρ Θ(εο)Υ (Mother of God)

CONDITION

Figures painted directly on white preparation layer. Moses' head slightly off-center in incised, double-contoured halo. Cleaning strips on both panels reveal original background. Extensive abrasion to background and significant loss at top and bottom of panels. Selected parts of figures appear to have been reworked; in area of Aaron's head, thick black outline goes over later pigmented varnish layer. Aaron's scroll shows white paint overlapping later pigmented varnish layer. Reverse: good condition with scattered losses over entire surface, especially at edges. Wood strip added at join. Major losses to Virgin on upper panel.

The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt

DURING THE CELEBRATION OF THE LITURGY, the priest passes back and forth through doors such as these in the iconostasis, the barrier that separates the nave of a church or chapel from the sanctuary. Here Moses and his brother Aaron, two figures closely associated with Sinai, are depicted side by side, both looking intensely at the viewer. Moses holds the tablets of the Law, Aaron a scroll on which his name has been inscribed. The portrait of Moses—with long, dark brown locks—is not the type usually found on Sinai icons, though it does occur in manuscript illumination.[1] The form of the marble tablets, a diptych whose wings are rounded at the top, is also unusual; it may reflect Western influence, as the Byzantine tablets are generally rectangular. Curious too is the image of Aaron not in the vestments of a high priest but as a prophet with a scroll (only his red miter indicates his priestly status).[2]

The haggard face of Moses with its white highlights, sunken cheeks, and furrowed brow, the vast triangular beard of Aaron, and the long curly locks on the shoulders of both men are exaggerations of a late-twelfth-century phase of Comnenian style,[3] while the shimmering pastel loops and pleats of the draperies associate these figures with the fulsome Moses portraits on Mount Sinai of the early thirteenth century.[4] The faces foreshadow the hugely expressive, lined faces of the Crusader "Veneto-Byzantine" works from later in the century.[5]

The theme encountered most commonly on Byzantine bema doors is that of the Annunciation (see, for example, cat. no. 22). Here the doors are adorned with the figures of Moses and Aaron instead, two individuals with particular relevance to the site and history of Sinai. Yet the Old Testament figures do make reference to the Mother of God in their own way, for both the Burning Bush encountered by Moses and the tabernacle housing the Ark of the Covenant established by Moses and Aaron were viewed as prefigurations of the Virgin.[6]

The reverse side of these doors, painted in the sixteenth century, makes this symbolism more explicit. Now both Moses and Aaron are high priests (only the high priest could enter the Holy of Holies of the tabernacle, now identified with the church sanctuary). Moses carries a model of the tabernacle on which is painted not the ark but the Virgin and Child that it prefigures, and the stamnos, the jar that held the manna provided by God.[7] Aaron holds his flowering rod. The upper part of the wings incorporates the traditional Annunciation.

NPŠ

23, reverse

NOTES

1. Weitzmann and Bernabò 1999.
2. See Exodus 7:1.
3. For example, the churches of the Anargyroi and the Mavriotissa at Kastoria, of Lagoudera on Cyprus, and the early-thirteenth-century frescoes at Studenica and Mileševo in Serbia. The figure of Aaron could conceivably have been modeled on the figure of Elijah, who, with Moses, flanks Christ in the sixth-century Transfiguration mosaic in the Sinai apse.
4. Manafis 1990, pp. 166–67, figs. 36–37.
5. Manafis 1990, p. 189, fig. 64 (Anastasis).
6. The Ark of the Covenant was made to contain the tablets of the Law. The tabernacle eventually housed the Ark, as well as the flowering rod of Aaron, the stamnos of manna, and other liturgical implements. See Hebrews 9:1–7.
7. For another sixteenth-century representation of these objects on a Sinai bema door, see Manafis 1990, p. 215, fig. 90. The pilgrim Paisios, visiting Sinai in the late sixteenth century, mentions a great bema door in the basilica, whose wings (*panaportia*) were adorned with images of the prophets Moses and Aaron. He reports that the stamnos, the tablets of the Law, the censer, and the rod were all kept under the synthronon in the apse of the basilica. Papadopoulos-Kerameus 1891, p. 22, lines 557–62; German translation in Külzer 1994, p. 365.

REFERENCES

M. Chatzidakis 1979, pp. 355–56, pl. 74, figs. 18–19; Mouriki 1990, pp. 110, 165, fig. 35; Lidov 1999, p. 90, no. 25.

ΜΗΡ
ΘΥ

24, 25 Virgin and Christ from Grand Deesis

24. VIRGIN FROM GRAND DEESIS

Early thirteenth century

Tempera and silver-colored metal leaf with pigmented varnish over textile on panel

101.6 × 65.7 × 3.4 cm (40 × 25⅜ × 1⅝ in.)

INSCRIBED
Μ(ήτη)Ρ Θ(εο)Υ (Mother of God)

CONDITION
Good condition. Virgin's halo incised. Losses to paint in Virgin's robe and veil. Major loss in center of right hand. Some regilding on background. Wood strips added to top and bottom of panel. Reverse: striped design over preparatory layer.

The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt

25. CHRIST FROM GRAND DEESIS

Early thirteenth century

Tempera and silver-colored metal leaf with pigmented varnish over textile on panel

101.6 × 66.4 × 3.5 cm (40 × 26⅛ × 1⅜ in.)

INSCRIBED
Ι(ησοῦ)C Χ(ριστό)C (Jesus Christ); on the open book: † ΕΓΩ ΕΙΜΙ ΤΟ ΦΩC ΤΟΥ ΚΟCΜΟΥ· Ο ΑΚΟΛΟΥΘΩΝ ΕΜΟΙ ΟΥ ΜΗ ΠΕΡΙΠΑΤΗCΗ ΕΝ ΤΗ CΚΟΤΕΙΑ · ΑΛΛ' ΕΞΕΙ ΤΟ ΦΩC ΤΗC ΖΩΗ(ς) † (I am the light of the world; the one who follows me would not walk in shadow, but enter the Light of Life [JOHN 8:12].)

CONDITION
Halo incised. Extensive losses in gilded and painted surfaces. Former restoration treatment included toned regilding in background and a tratteggio-style retouching in figure of Christ and half of his inscription. Wood strips added to top and bottom of engaged frame. Reverse: striped design over preparatory layer.

The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt

WHILE HER GAZE EVADES THE EYE OF THE VIEWER, Mary's hand raised in intercession directs the faithful across the space to the icon of Christ. Her son responds with a visual affirmation of divine benevolence—his blessing. His gaze addresses the viewer. Through the open book and inscription he offers the path to salvation and presents himself as the Light of Life.

The two icons were likely painted on Mount Sinai, as attested by the use of the characteristic gold burnishing of the halos and the decorative cloth-design pattern on the backs of the icons. As suggested by their large size, these two panels stood on an iconostasis, flanking the royal doors. Most likely joined by a third panel, of John the Baptist (fig. 109), these icons formed a Great Deesis (Intercession) group (see also fig. 36).[1] In a Byzantine Deesis, Mary and John the Baptist flank Christ and raise their hands to plead with him for the salvation of humanity; depending on the size of the iconostasis, the composition could easily expand to include the apostles, saints, and angels.[2]

The metaphor of Christ as the light stated in the inscription is actualized in the space of the church the moment the oil lamps are lit or burning candles are brought before this icon. Suddenly the burnished halo begins to dazzle. The Greek word used for nimbus, φεγγεῖον (literally "radiance of light"), captures this optical splendor.[3] The halo was understood to show divine energy and grace.[4] The cruciform burnished design of Christ's halo, along with the cascading chrysography of his drapery, would increase the optical dazzle of the icon, thus enhancing the vision of the Savior as the Light of Life.[5] Through this coruscating splendor the icon would perform divine presence.[6]

While exhibiting the same shimmer of gold, the icon of the Virgin is more subdued; Mary's halo displays simple burnishing, and her clothing, unlike Christ's gilded drapery, lacks the glittering highlights. The hierarchy between these two figures is thus visually established and confirmed. The faithful is led from the interceding hand of Mary to fall in *proskynesis* (veneration or prostration) before the light of the cosmos, and recognize the Savior in it.

24, reverse

24 (opposite), Virgin from Grand Deesis

ΙΣ
ΧΣ

Unlike repoussé metal revetments whose relief surface gives a stronger glittering effect, the burnished gold of these two paintings offers a mellower, subdued shimmer. It resembles the effect of a calm, flat metal surface and acts like a mirror, thus giving viewers the possibility of seeing themselves in the image. This mirror effect proleptically suggests the transformation that the faithful would undergo at the high point of the liturgy, the Eucharist. Through their shimmering glitter the two icons would also establish a visual path of salvation within the church space, linking these panels to the glistening eucharistic chalice and paten on the altar table in the inner sanctuary.

Philologists have frequently remarked on the spelling "mistakes" in the Greek inscriptions on Byzantine art objects. These inconsistencies are usually attributed to the poor education of the inscriber. Here the mistakes are in the orthography: CKOTEIA instead of σκοτία, TIC rather than Τῆς. Orthographically incorrect but phonetically precise, the inscriptions render the vowels as they are spoken. This reliance on sound demonstrates that inscriptions (known in Greek as *epigrams*, "letters inscribed on a surface") on art objects were performative—meant to be pronounced out loud in the course of the liturgy or individual prayer.[7] The writing is a prompt for speaking the phrase in time and space. Through this performance the icon becomes a sonorous, speaking body—it is *empsychos graphe* (literally, "in-spirited," inhabited by the Holy Spirit, animated).[8]

BP

NOTES

1. The icon of Saint John the Baptist measures 97.5 × 66.5 cm (38⅜ × 26⅛ in.). Its condition does not permit exhibition. As with the icons of Christ and the Virgin, the backside of the John the Baptist panel exhibits the same pattern of alternating red and blue-black, undulating brushstrokes. Two other Sinai icons, of Saints Peter and Paul, present the appropriate measurements to fit the same Great Deesis composition. Aspra-Vardavakis 1999, pp. 180–95, fig. 12.
2. Annemarie Weyl Carr in *ODB*, s.v. "Deesis" (with bibliog.).
3. Annemarie Weyl Carr and Alexander Kazhdan in *ODB*, s.v. "Nimbus."
4. Symeon, archbishop of Thessaloniki (1416/17–29), on the symbolic meaning of halos, *PG*, vol. 155, col. 869B.
5. On the significance of shimmering lights, see Frances 2003; and Peers 2004, pp. 110–11, 115–17, 126–31.
6. Pentcheva 2006b, and Pentcheva forthcoming, chap. 4.
7. Pentcheva forthcoming, Papalexandrou 2001. See also Nelson 1989.
8. On *empsychos graphe*, see Pentcheva 2000b; Pentcheva 2004.

REFERENCES

Weitzmann 1980, no. 18, Mouriki 1990, pp. 114, 176, figs. 49–50; M. Chatzidakis 1995a; Aspra-Vardavakis 1997; Aspra-Vardavakis 1999.

25 (opposite), Christ from Grand Deesis

Figure 109 (right)
John the Baptist from Grand Deesis, early thirteenth century. Tempera and silver-colored metal leaf with pigmented varnish over textile on panel, 97.5 × 66.5 cm (38⅜ × 26⅛ in.). The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt. Photo: Bruce White.

ΟΑΓΙΟΣ
ΒΑΣΙΛΕΙ-
ΟΣ

26, 27 Saint Basil and Saint John Chrysostom with Liturgical Scrolls

26. SAINT BASIL WITH LITURGICAL SCROLL

ca. 1200, Sinai(?)

Tempera and metal leaf (probably silver) with pigmented varnish on panel

84.3 × 35.9 × 2.5 cm (33 3/16 × 14 1/8 × 1 in.)

INSCRIBED

Ο ΑΓΙΟC ΒΑCΙΛΕΙΟC (Saint Basil); on his scroll: † Πρόσχες Κ(ύρι)ε Ἰ(ησο)ῦ Χ(ριστ)ὲ ὁ Θ(εὸ)ς ἡμῶν ἐξ ἁγίου κατηκητηρίου σου καὶ ἀπὸ θρόνου δόξης της βασιλείας σου καὶ ἐλθὲ εἰς τὸ ἁγιασαι ἡμᾶς (Lord Jesus Christ our God, give heed from Thy holy dwelling place, and from the throne of glory of Thy kingdom, and come and sanctify us [Prayer of the Elevation of the Bread, from the Liturgy of John Chrysostom])

CONDITION

Uneven varnish layers. Frame created by adding wood strips to panel. Large cracks at interface between panel and applied frame, especially in corners. Red-brown paint layer on back was later painted white with broad brushstrokes.

The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt

27. SAINT JOHN CHRYSOSTOM WITH LITURGICAL SCROLL

ca. 1200, Sinai(?)

Tempera and metal leaf (probably silver) with pigmented varnish on panel

84.1 × 35.6 × 2.5 cm (33 1/8 × 14 × 1 in.)

INSCRIBED

Ο ΑΓΙΟC Ἰ(ω)(άννης) Ο ΧΡΥCΟCΤΟΜΟC (Saint John Chrysostom); on his scroll: † Οὐδεὶς ἄξιος τῶν συνδεδεμένων ταῖς σαρκικαῖς ἐπιθυμίαις καὶ ἡδοναῖς προσερχεσθ(αι) ἢ προσεγγίζειν ἢ λειτουργεῖν σοι βασιλ[εῦ τῆς δόξης] (No one entangled in carnal desires and pleasures is worthy to meet or approach you or to serve you, O King of Glory . . . [Prayer of the Cherubic Hymn from the Liturgy of John Chrysostom])[1]

CONDITION

Uneven varnish layers. Frame created by adding wooden strips to panel. Large cracks at interface between panel and applied frame, especially in corners. Red-brown paint layer on back later painted white with broad brushstrokes.

The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt

26 (opposite), Saint Basil with Liturgical Scroll

Figures 110–12 (right)
(Left to right) Evangelist Mark, Saint John Eleimon, Saint Athanasios, ca. 1200. Tempera and metal leaf (probably silver) with pigmented varnish on panel. The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt. Photos: Bruce White.

THIS FINE PAIR OF PANELS PRESENTS two fourth-century bishops, Saints John Chrysostom and Basil the Great, considered the authors of the two main liturgies of the Orthodox Church. They bend forward, as though toward an altar, and on their scrolls are written prayers recited in a low voice by a celebrant of the liturgy of Chrysostom. Their portraits are conventional—Basil with a long black beard, John with an emaciated face, scrawny beard, and balding head. They wear the standard vestments of high-ranking bishops, especially the *polystavrion*—a phelonion, or outer mantle, covered with crosses.

Chrysostom and Basil are often represented at the head of a line of officiating bishops in the frescoed apse of a church. But here they occupy separate icon panels, a highly unusual situation. Six additional icons in the monastery bearing images of celebrant bishops belong to the same series (figs. 110–15).[2] The presence of Ignatios Theophoros (a bishop martyr of Antioch) in this company is somewhat unusual, and the inclusion of the evangelist Mark, the first bishop of Alexandria, is entirely unprecedented.[3] Mark's counterpart here in rank and dress is Saint James Adelphotheos, who was the first bishop of Jerusalem. The enumeration of episcopal sees here suggests some effort at positioning Sinai into this ecclesiastical framework.

Paisios, a Greek churchman who visited Sinai in the late sixteenth century, saw images of eight hierarchs in the apse of the Chapel of the Burning Bush, five of whom he names. He may well be referring to this very series of icons.[4] If this is indeed their original location (and the dimensions of the apse do make this possible), it reveals how crucial it had become by the early thirteenth century to have images of officiating bishops near an altar, even when conditions made it difficult to paint them there. The antiquity of the architecture on Mount Sinai often led to unusual solutions. Such a location would also indicate that the altar in this Chapel of the Burning Bush was being used for the celebration of the Eucharist, not merely for prayers.[5]

The date of these icons is problematic. The lined faces, with their anxious, raised brows, suggest a date in the very early thirteenth century.[6] But the almost metallic *polystavria*, the repetitive poses and ornament, the surprisingly glowing visages and feathery rendering of the hair of some of the elderly bishops, the

flat-footed, low-slung figures of the two "apostle" bishops do not fit well with works of this period. Mark and James Adelphotheos are dressed very oddly indeed; under their episcopal vestments they wear antique robes and sandals—a curious and perhaps unparalleled amalgam of two dress codes, that of the apostle/evangelist and that of the bishop. Manoles Chatzidakis has proposed that though they are painted in a style characteristic of the late twelfth to early thirteenth century, this series of icons only copies works of this period and was actually executed by the team of artists who were busy painting frescoes based on early models elsewhere in the monastery in the second half of the fifteenth century.[7] It is possible, however, that as we learn more about the range of styles in use during the thirteenth century, these bishops will again take their place in the earlier period.

NPŠ

Figures 113–15
(left to right) Gregory Theologos, Ignatios Theophoros, and James Adelphotheos, ca. 1200. Tempera and metal leaf (probably silver) with pigmented varnish on panel. The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt. Photos: Bruce White.

NOTES

1. The transcriptions reproduced here are as they appear on the icons, with accents and breathing marks included.
2. There are three right-facing bishops—the evangelist Mark and Saints John Elemon and Athanasios; and three left-facing bishops—Gregory Theologos, Ignatios Theophoros, and James Adelphotheos. They carry, respectively, the prothesis prayer, the first antiphon prayer, the *proskomide* prayer from the liturgy of Basil, the Trisagion prayer, the second antiphon prayer, and again the prothesis prayer (Mark and James carry the same text). The original order cannot be determined, but Chrysostom and Basil surely headed their respective lines, and it is likely that the two "apostolic" bishops, Mark and James, who do not wear the *polystavion*, came at the far end of each line.
3. Babić and Walter 1976, pp. 269–80.
4. There does seem to be wall space enough to allow for a series of eight icons, plus the image of the (Virgin as the) Burning Bush seen by Paisios in the center of the bema, in place of the usual Hetoimasia or Christ on the altar. According to Paisios, the conch of the apse was covered with gold-colored mosaics. He also refers to a touching image of the "Koimesis of Catherine." Papadopoulos-Kerameus 1891, p. 33, lines 827–40.
5. For the integration of the Chapel of the Burning Bush into the liturgical life of Sinai in the early thirteenth century, see the *Typikon* of Symeon of Sinai: Dmitrievskij 1895–1917, vol. 3, pp. 394–419; partial translation by N. P. Ševčenko in Ševčenko 2004.
6. Their attribution by Piatnitsky to the mid-twelfth century should be considered too early. The icons of Mark and James were probably executed by a different artist.
7. M. Chatzidakis 1970–72, pp. 225–28, pls. 83, 84. He proposes that the line of bishops formed part of a Great Deesis that may once have adorned the templon of the chapel of Saint James Adelphotheos, which lies to the north of the bema of the basilica. But the bishops are officiating and are therefore more likely to have flanked an altar than an image of the Deesis.

REFERENCES

M. Chatzidakis 1970–72, pp. 225–28, pls. 83–84. Yuri Piatnitsky in Saint Petersburg and London 2000, pp. 238–39, no. 556; Galey 2003, p. 49.

27 (opposite), Saint John Chrysostom with Liturgical Scroll

ΟΑΓΙΟΣ
ΙΩΑΝΝΗΣ
ΟΥΔΕΙΣ
ΑΞΙΟΣΤΩΝ
ΣΥΝΔΕΔΕ
ΗΕΝΩΜΕΝΟΙΣ
ΣΑΡΚΙΚΟΙΣ
ΕΠΙΘΥΜΙΑΙ
ΣΚΑΙΝΔΟΝ

Ο ΠΡΦ
ΗΛΙΑΣ

28 Prophet Elijah Fed by a Raven

ca. 1050–1100

Tempera and gold over textile on panel

129.2 × 69.2 × 3.5 cm (50⅞ × 27¼ × 1⅜ in.)

INSCRIBED

Ο ΠΡ(ο)Φ(ή)Τ(η)C ΗΛΙΑC (The prophet Elijah); in twelve-syllable Greek verse: Μορφούντε, Θεσβίτα, σε [Στεφ]άνω δίδου / τοῖς σοῖς ἱλασμοῖς πτεσμάτων ἀμνηστίαν (For Stephen, who fashioned your image, O Tishbite, obtain by your mercy pardon of transgressions); in Arabic:

اصفح ليس صوركا اصطفا-.....ايليا غفر ا- ما احترما

(Forgiveness for Stephen who painted you, O [prophet] Elijah. May God forgive him the sins he has committed)[1]

CONDITION

Decorative motifs (including cloud, God's sleeve, bread, and three lines in halo) incised in metal leaf. Thin brown underpainting of figure. Scattered losses where right and left edges of figure cover metal leaf. Figures painted directly on gold. Several layers of discolored and/or pigmented varnish, as seen in cleaning strip on right side. Engaged frame. Original repair to panel: on the back, a piece of wood half the thickness of the panel has been secured by two nails driven through the front. Reverse: striped design over preparatory layer.

The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt

THE HEBREW BIBLE (1 KINGS 19:8–18) recounts that God spoke to prophet Elijah the Tishbite at Mount Horeb, the present Jebel Musa near the Sinai monastery. Since the fourth century Christian pilgrims have prayed at a chapel by the cave where Elijah is believed to have once stayed.[2] According to an inventory from the 1920s, the present panel was originally housed there.[3] However, a description made between 1577 and 1592 locates it on the east wall of the narthex, or vestibule, in the monastery's main basilica.[4] It now hangs on the north wall of the basilica's nave.[5]

The icon portrays the prophet anachronistically dressed in an ancient Roman tunic, like other Old Testament figures in Byzantine art. The fur mantle over the tunic is Elijah's special attribute (2 KINGS 2:8, 2:13–14). It was venerated as a relic in one of the palace churches of the Byzantine capital, Constantinople.[6]

With arms raised in prayer, the prophet stands alert while a hand reaches out from the sky in a gesture signifying speech. The raven in the upper right corner refers to an earlier episode in his life (1 KINGS 17:2–7). Since Christians compared the nourishment that Elijah miraculously received in the desert to the bread of Holy Communion,[7] this scene was popular with Byzantine artists, who usually portrayed the prophet seated in a cave.[8] In terms of iconography, the closest parallel for the present image is found among the illustrations that a Constantinopolitan painter made in the 1030s for a Georgian volume of saints' lives.[9] The style of the Sinai icon points to the later decades of the eleventh century: it is closely comparable to the miniatures in two Greek Gospel books whose script dates them to about 1050–1100.[10] The lettering of Stephen's Arabic inscription here is also typical of that period (see also cat. no. 29).[11]

GRP

28, reverse

NOTES

1. Translation from the Arabic by George Sahba.
2. On the history of the site and pilgrims' accounts of it, see Pringle 1993–, vol. 2, p. 59, no. 152 (with bibliog).
3. N. Nikolaïdis, cited in Rabino 1935, p. 47, and in Rabino 1938, p. 59.
4. Papadopoulos-Kerameus 1891, p. 16, lines 383–84.
5. Photographs in Evans 2004, pp. 54, 62.
6. Janin 1953–81, vol. 3, p. 144 (with bibliog.).
7. Ştefănescu 1936, pp. 150–51.
8. On the scene's iconography, see Bascu-Barabas 1993.
9. Tbilisi, Kekelidze Institute, Ms. A-648 (see Amiranašvili 1966, fig. 19; on the manuscript in general, see Abbegašvili 1983, pp. 114–15, 117–18, 122).
10. Vienna, National Library, Cod. theol. gr. 154 (see Lowden 1997, p. 288; Buberl and Gerstinger 1937–38, vol. 2, pp. 21–31, no. 5, pls. 6–11) and Athens, National Library, Cod. 57 (see Marava-Chatzinikolaou and Toufexi-Paschou 1978–97, vol. 1, pp. 108–17, no. 26, pls. 216–19).
11. As kindly confirmed by Irene A. Bierman, University of California, Los Angeles.

REFERENCES

Amantos 1928, p. 45; Rabino 1935, pp. 48, 99; Rabino 1938, pp. 59–60, 115, and p. 111, nos. 145, 146; Sotiriou 1953, pp. 154–55; G. Sotiriou and M. G. Sotiriou 1956–58, vol. 1, fig. 74, and vol. 2, pp. 88–89; Weitzmann 1978, pp. 36, 96–97, no. 29; Weitzmann 1984b, pp. 102–6 (with bibliog.); Mouriki 1990, pp. 109–10, 164, fig. 34, and p. 385 n. 43; Gandis 1993–94, pp. 370–71, figs. 6–9; Mouriki 1995, p. 120, no. 15; Vokotopoulos 1995, pp. 78, 203, no. 56; Ludov 1999, pp. 92–93, no. 26; Yuri Piatnitsky in Saint Petersburg and London 2000, pp. 242–44, no. 558 (with bibliog.); Piatnitsky 2004

Ο ΩΝ
ΙΩΥΣΗΣ

29 Moses Receiving the Law before the Burning Bush

ca. 1050–1100

Tempera and gold on panel

134 × 69.9 × 4.1 cm (52¾ × 27½ × 1⅝ in.)

INSCRIBED

O ΠΡ(ο)Φ(ή)Τ(η)C MOYCHC (The prophet Moses); in twelve-syllable Greek verse: † Ὃς ἐτόρησεν, ὦ θεόπτα, σὸν τύπον / [αἰτ]εῖ Στέφανος λύσιν ἁμ-πλακημά(των). (The person who painted your likeness, / named Stephen, requests, O God-seer, release from his errors); in Arabic: يا ناظر الله اعطي مسك مغفرة لاصطفا- ء الذي صور محاسكا (O you who have seen God, grant forgiveness to Stephen who painted your virtues);[1] in a later hand in Greek: † Μνήσθητι, Κ[ύρι]ε, τὴν ψυχὴν Μανουήλ (Remember, Lord, the soul of Manuel)

CONDITION

Small losses to the paint and gilding overall. Previous restoration removed discolored layers of varnish, as seen in the cleaning strip on right side. Large vertical crack runs through center of panel. Painting executed on a single panel. Reverse: striped design over preparatory layer. Two modern cross battens added.

The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt

THE PRESENT ICON FORMS A PAIR with that of Elijah (see cat. no. 28), since the two are almost the same size, their backs are painted with the same striped pattern, and both are inscribed with the same person's prayers. The claim by Stephen in the inscription that he produced the images means, as in similar Byzantine texts,[2] that he paid for their making. He evidently spared no expense for his future salvation and had the entire panels, rather than just the visible background, covered with gold leaf that shines luxuriously beneath the pigment.

In the late sixteenth century, Stephen's icons flanked the entrance from the narthex into the nave of the Sinai basilica.[3] Their position was probably comparable to that of the two fourteenth-century mosaic panels of Saints Peter and Paul at the church of the Chora Monastery in Constantinople.[4] The scene of Moses receiving the Law (EXOD. 24:9–15) occurs often in Byzantine art,[5] but here the figure is uncharacteristically shown facing left, as in the sixth-century mosaic above the basilica's altar.[6] This, as well as the presence of an Arabic inscription, suggests that the icon was made especially for the Sinai monastery. The Burning Bush next to Moses' unshod feet relates to the biblical event (EXOD. 3:1–4:17) whose site the Sinai basilica marks.

GRP

29, reverse

NOTES

1. Translation from the Arabic by George Saliba
2. Lauxtermann 2003, p. 159.
3. Papadopoulos-Kerameus 1891, p. 16, lines 383–84; compare the photographs in Forsyth and Weitzmann 1965, pls. 44–45.
4. Underwood 1966–75, vol. 2, pp. 14, 16, 30–31; C. Mango 2000, p. 61, pl. 18.
5. On the iconography of this scene, see Aliprantis 1986.
6. Forsyth and Weitzmann 1965, pls. 42, 127, 174; Evans 2004, p. 49.

REFERENCES

Amantos 1928, pp. 44–45; Rabino 1935, pp. 48, 98; Rabino 1938, pp. 59, 115, and p. 111, nos. 142, 144; G. Sotiriou 1953, pp. 153–54; G. Sotiriou and M. G. Sotiriou 1956–58, vol. 1, fig. 75, and vol. 2, pp. 89–90; Weitzmann 1984b, pp. 102–6 (with bibliog.); Mouriki 1990, pp. 110, 385 n. 44; Garidis 1993–94, pp. 370–71, figs. 6–9; Mouriki 1995, p. 121, no. 16; Vokotopoulos 1995, pp. 79–80, 204, nos. 57, 58; Yuri Piatnitsky in Saint Petersburg and London 2000, pp. 242–44, no. 559 (with bibliog.); Piatnitsky 2004.

30 | Menologion Diptych with Feast Scenes

Eleventh century

Tempera and gold on panel

36.5 × 49.1 × 1.4 cm (14⅜ × 19⅜16 × 9⁄16 in.)

INSCRIBED

Back: left wing: Χ(ριστὸς) Χ(άριν) Χ(ριστιανοῖς) Χαρίζει) (Christ bestows grace on Christians);[1] right wing: Ι(ησοῦ)C Χ(ριστὸ)C NIKA (Jesus Christ conquers)

CONDITION

Excellent condition overall. Saints have incised halos. Abrasion to gilded background between rows. Pigmented varnish appears to have been applied only to the rows between figures and then inscriptions applied over varnish. Leather hinge joins panels. Reverse of right panel has remnants of gilding over the entire decorative border design; remnants of black inscriptions over surface. Reverse of left panel shows evidence of having been entirely repainted with orange paint; previous mechanical cleaning reveals remnants of original surface treatment.

The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt

NOTES

1. Walter 1997, p. 212, a reference I owe to Georgi Parpulov.
2. Robert F. Taft in *ODB* (online edition), s.v. "Great Feasts."
3. E.g., Dome of Daphni. Belting 1994, fig. 100.
4. Baltoyanni 2000, pp. 149–51
5. Goldschmidt and Weitzmann 1979, vol. 2, figs. 38b, 60.
6. Cutler 2002, p. 38, fig. 1. I thank Anthony Cutler for this reference.

REFERENCES

G. Sotiriou and M. G. Sotiriou 1956–58, vol. 1, figs. 131–35, and vol. 2, pp. 119–20; Galavaris 1990, pp. 100, 148–49, fig. 17; Belting 1994, 252–53.

SPREAD ACROSS THE TWO WINGS OF THIS ICON are the carefully identified events and saints commemorated during the church year. The portraits of saints, grouped in threes, begin with the start of the administrative year, September 1, and with the saint celebrated that day, Symeon Stylites, always recognizable by his pillar. Also included in this section are several narrative scenes, including the Birth of the Virgin (September 8) and the Exaltation of the Cross (September 14) in the first row. At the top, above the rows of saints, there are images in burnished gold circles of Christ, the Virgin and Child, and the series of twelve great feasts—the Dodekaorton—that became standard from the eleventh century.[2] Reversing the order of templon programs, Jesus on the left wing turns his eyes to Mary and the infant at the right. The figure of Christ is the type often seen in domical images.[3] The Virgin and Child are damaged, but enough remains to suggest that this is the Virgin Eleousa, in which the mother holds her child and he reaches across to her cloak.[4]

Unlike with most icons, the back of the diptych is fully finished (see below). The monochrome ornament on a reddish ground resembles tooled leather book bindings. The overall design follows conventions of earlier ivory diptychs, also decorated with an ornamental border, central cross, and the common abbreviation IC/XC NI/KA.[5] Rarer are the four X's on the left wing, but they are found in the same form and position on a later enameled cross reliquary at Esztergom.[6] Both inscriptions provide solace to the beholder of this small personal diptych that, in view of its outer decoration, was also meant to be displayed closed.

RSN

30, reverse

31 Menologion Icon for August

ca. 1200, Sinai(?)

Tempera and metal leaf with pigmented varnish on panel

129.5 (with cross, 139.7) × 67.6 × 3.2 cm
(51 [with cross, 55] × 26⅝ × 1¼ in.)

INSCRIBED
Each saint has an identifying caption written in red alongside his or her head.

CONDITION
Several of the saints have been repainted; some inscriptions have been repainted in red color consistent with the original. Extensive passages of restored metal leaf. Frame is a later addition.

The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt

NOTES
1. These scenes appear, respectively: the first on the second row; the last on the third row; and two scenes on the lowest row—the third from the right and the far right.
2. Stewart 1893–97, vol. 2, pp. 608–10, 623.
3. There are three other sets of calendar icons at Sinai, all smaller and older than the month-by-month series. Two of these sets have the saints grouped into somewhat larger units (three months or a half-year on a single panel). One of these two sets, and the third set as well, opts for images of saints' martyrdoms over standing portraits.
4. There are more than a thousand portraits on these twelve panels. The run of saints and their martyrdoms should be viewed in connection with the verse calendars of Christopher of Mitylene (eleventh century) and others. See Follieri 1980; Hutter forthcoming.
5. N. P. Ševčenko 1990, pp. 11–26 ("Edition A").

REFERENCES
G. Sotiriou and M. G. Sotiriou 1956–58, vol. 2, pp. 117–19; Weitzmann 1984b, pp. 107–12; Mouriki 1990, p. 108; N. P. Ševčenko 2002.

THIS MENOLOGION (OR CALENDAR) ICON is one of twelve such panels in the main church at Sinai, each displaying the saints celebrated in a single month of the year. This particular panel, bearing the saints for August, is the last in the series (the church year begins September 1).

The saints are grouped essentially in triads, five days per row. The most important saint of the day occupies the central position, but when there is a plethora of saints for one day, and too few for another, saints belonging to one group may be distributed over several different days. The choice of saints follows for the most part the Constantinopolitan calendar, even if the dates of the feasts are often shifted a few days one way or the other with respect to that model. The holy portraits are at once generic and highly individualized. Each saint is revealed, by his or her costume, to belong to a specific category, such as martyr, bishop, monk, apostle, nun, and so on. Then each figure is carefully individualized through physiognomy: young, middle-aged, or old; beardless, or short- or long-bearded; balding or wild haired, and so on. Despite the small scale, these portraits are remarkably consistent with established Byzantine portrait types. When a major feast day comes around (e.g., the Transfiguration on August 6, the Dormition on August 15, the beheading of John the Baptist on August 29, or the deposition of the Virgin's belt on August 31), it is given priority and its image appears in place of the holy figures.[1]

The twelve Sinai panels hang today on the twelve columns of the basilica, a location noted by pilgrims at least as early as the fifteenth century. Latin pilgrims believed the icons to be pictures of saints whose relics were embedded within the columns, and that a visit to the columns one by one could earn years of indulgences.[2]

All the Byzantine calendar icons that survive come from Sinai.[3] Their original function remains unclear, other than to give a precise visual identity to each of the hundreds of venerated figures that make up the universal church.[4] An eleventh-century set of manuscripts of saints' lives, unrelated to Sinai, uses the same portrait-gallery format to depict in a frontispiece every saint whose life appears in the volume; this suggests a more widespread distribution of the form, and perhaps the desire that each written hagiographic text be balanced by an accessible, and equally authoritative, image.[5]

NPŠ

31, front and reverse, with new top

31, detail

Ιω

32 Gospel Book in Arabic

860(?), Palestine

Ink and wash on parchment

Each leaf: 22 × 15.8 cm (8⅝ × 6³⁄₁₆ in.)

INSCRIBED
On fol. 16r: Next to the portrait of the evangelist, in abbreviated Greek and in Arabic: "John."

CONDITION
Fragmentary manuscript of fourteen disbound quires. Parchment is cockled with significant deformation and losses due to burial and presumed rodent damage. Considerable dirt accumulations on surfaces of a number of folios. Otherwise the state of preservation of inks and pigments is very good.

The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt (Sinai cod. NF Arab.membr.14)

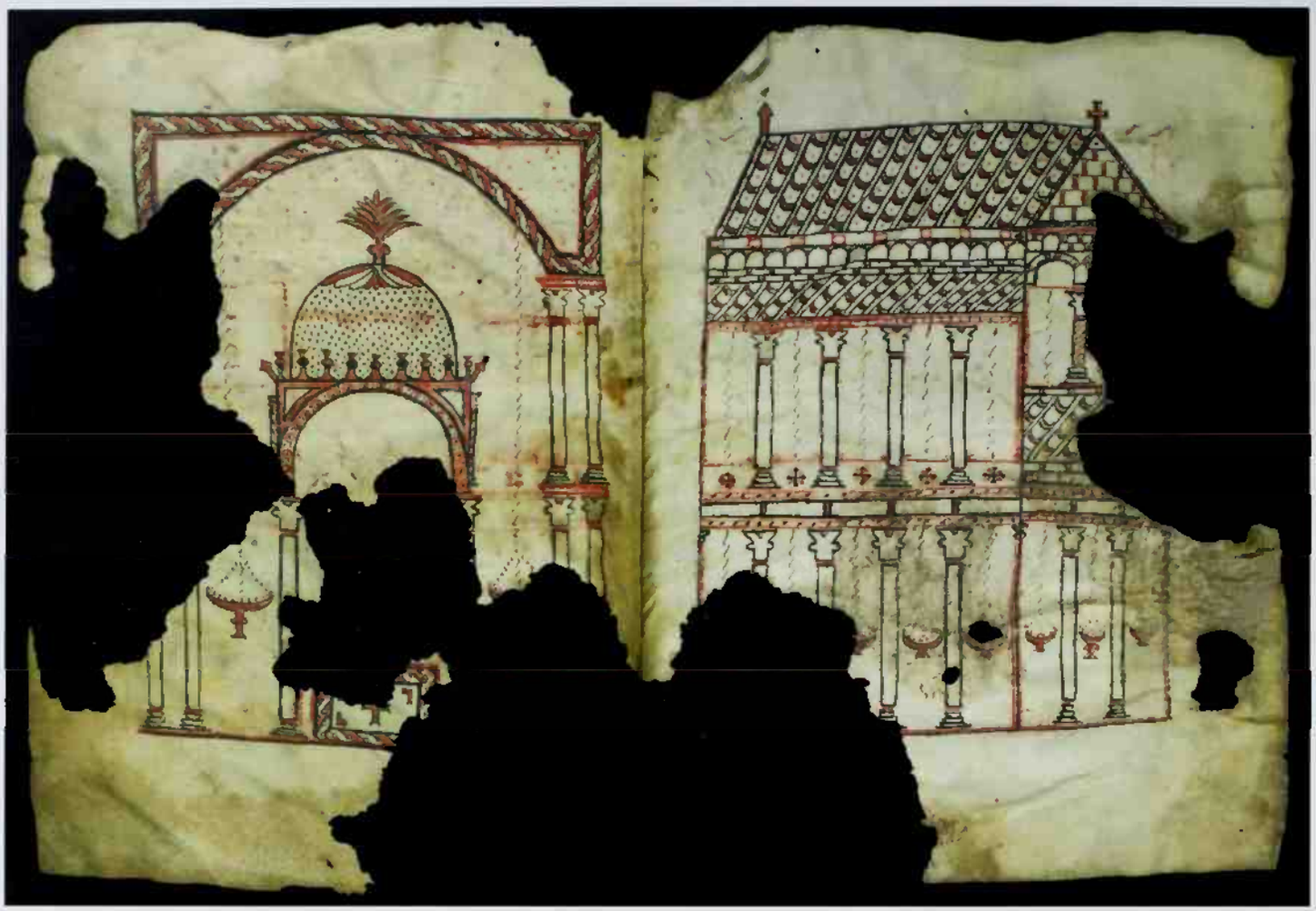
TOGETHER WITH A LARGE NUMBER OF OTHER OLD BOOKS, this manuscript was accidentally discovered at the Sinai monastery in 1975, in a storeroom that had been immured and forgotten for centuries.[1] Lacking covers and many pages, the volume presently contains parts of the Gospels of Mark, Luke, and John. Some of its missing leaves can be identified. The frontispiece, with an image of Christ on one side and the evangelist Matthew on the other, is now in Saint Petersburg (fig. 116).[2] Five leaves from the end were also found in 1975 but catalogued as a separate item.[3] They contain a scribal entry that reads (as translated by Maria Mavroudi):

> This Gospel book of the four evangelists was finished with the help of God. The first is Matthew, who expressed himself in Hebrew in [al-S-n-d...?]. The second is Mark, who expressed himself in Greek in the city of R[ome?]. The third is Luke who expressed himself in Greek in the city of Alexandr[ia]. The fourth is John, son of Zebedee, who expressed himself in Greek in the city of Ephesus. In the year, from among the years of eternity, six-thousand-three-hundred and sixty-eight. And, in years of the Romans, in the year eight hundred and nine [...],[4] on Tuesday on the feast of my Saint George, on the third of the time [period] of November, [...] Tuesday on the eighth of the time [period] of [the month] Muharram of the year [...].[5] Blessing from God, prosperity, joy, and eternal happiness. [...] and [?] our Lord Jesus the Messiah is with his spirit. Amen.

This note makes the Sinai Gospel book the oldest dated Christian Arabic manuscript. Its precise chronology is not clear, but the year 6368 most probably corresponds to the period March 21, 860 to March 20, 861. (However, November 3 was a Sunday then, and not a Tuesday, as the text states.)

32 (opposite), Evangelist John, fol. 16r

32, facing page, in Arabic, fol. 15v



32. two folio pages from last quire of manuscript

After the rise of the Abbasid dynasty in 750, the Eastern Orthodox (Melchite) Church in the Near East increasingly adopted the Arabic language,[6] and thus the Greek Gospels were translated into Arabic.[7] Judging from scribal notes preserved in other manuscripts, the copying of Arab Christian books in the ninth century was centered at the two large monasteries of Saint Sabas and Saint Chariton on the outskirts of Jerusalem.[8] The Sinai Gospel book was most likely produced there, as well.

Outlined in the brown and red inks of the text, the volume's miniatures may be attributed to its anonymous scribe and compared in style to the illustrations of two other manuscripts that were also probably made in medieval Palestine: an Arabic copy of the Pauline Epistles dated 892, and a Greek book of medical plants now in Paris.[9] Portraits of the evangelists and of Christ were traditional for Gospel books and are found, for example, in the Syriac Rabbula Gospels of AD 586 and in a series of miniatures now at Princeton, roughly contemporary with those of the Sinai manuscript.[10] Their very prominent architectural frames, shaped like a basilical church with galleries, are more unusual. On the book's closing pages, the building reappears with a canopy-covered altar, depicted so that, by convention, its interior and exterior are visible at the same time.[11] Rather than representing a particular structure,[12] this picture would have reminded the reader that the Gospels are publicly read in church. The text of the Sinai manuscript includes rubrics that indicate the days when such readings took place.[13]

GRP

NOTES

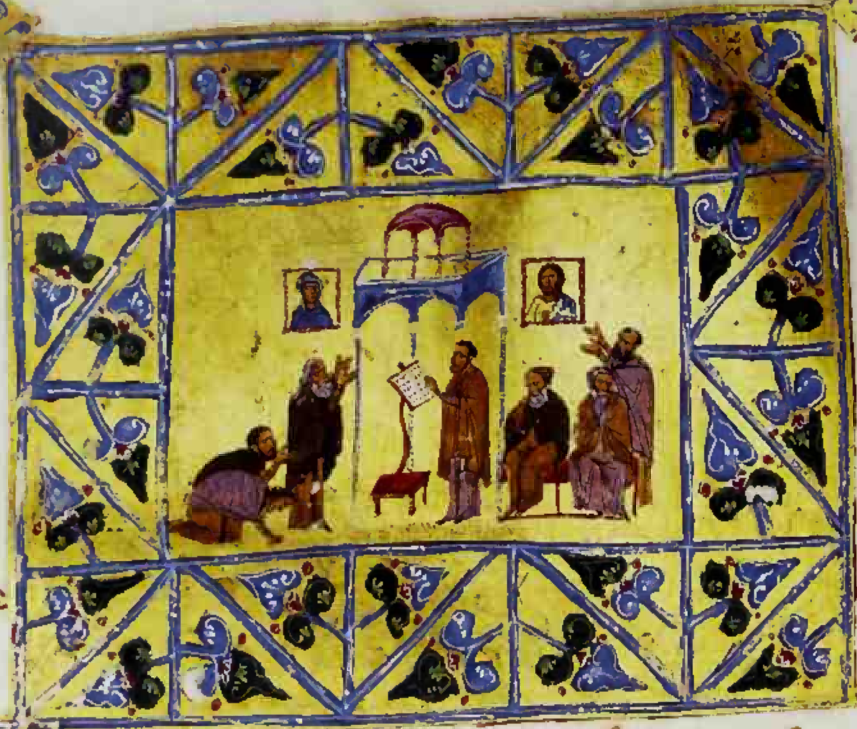
1. Damianos 1999; Sophronios 1999.
2. Saint Petersburg, Library of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Ms. Q no. 537 (see Likhacheva 1965, pp. 365–70, pls. 9, 10; Moscow and Saint Petersburg 1977, vol. 1, p. 87, no. 113, with bibliog.).
3. Meïmaris 1985, p. 27 (Greek text), pp. 24–25 (Arabic text), figs. 19–21 and pls. 5–6, no. 16.
4. Maria Mavroudi notes: "There is a hole in the text. Arabic numerals record thousands first, then hundreds, then units, then decades. Beside 809, as it stands at present, the number originally could have been 819, 829, 839, 849, 859, 869, 879, 889, or 899."
5. Maria Mavroudi notes: "The Muslim month Muharram ca. 850 was about the month of April. But the Arabic 'N-u-n-b-r-s' (or at best 'N-u-f-b-r-s') is an otherwise unattested word and must reflect the Greek colloquial pronunciation 'Noemvris' (November) or something like it."
6. Griffith 1988.
7. Griffith 1985a.
8. Griffith 1985b, esp. pp. 37–45; Griffith 1989.
9. Saint Petersburg, National Library of Russia, Ms. Arabic N.F. no. 327 (see Weitzmann 1943 and Leroy 1974, pp. 92–94, no. iv, pl. 28.1; Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Ms. grec 2179, known as the Paris Dioscorides (see Paris 1992, pp. 345–46, no. 256, with bibliog.).
10. Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Ms. Plut. I, 56 (see Vatican City 2000, pp. 145, 148–53, no. 10, with bibliog.); Princeton, N.J., University Libraries, Ms. Garrett 6 (see New York 1997a, pp. 90–91, no. 43, with bibliog.).
11. On similar architectural representations in early medieval art, see Duval 1965.
12. Compare Spatharakis 1980–81, pp. 144, 146.
13. Kindly pointed out to me by Maria Mavroudi, University of California, Berkeley; compare Garitte 1972.

REFERENCES

Meïmaris 1985, p. 27 (Greek text), p. 24 (Arabic text), figs. 16, 17, pls. 3, 4, no. 14; Garidis 1993–94, pp. 373–74, figs. 12–15; Hunt 1998, pp. 129, 135.

Figure 116
Evangelist Matthew, Ms. Q. no. 537, single leaf, verso. Library of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Saint Petersburg, Russia. (After Likhacheva 1965)

⁘ Περὶ τῆς ἱερᾶς καὶ μητρὸς τῶν ἀρετῶν



Προσευχή ἐστι· κατὰ μὲν τὴν αὐτῆς
ποιότητα, συνουσία καὶ ἕνωσις ἀνθρώπου
καὶ θεοῦ· κατὰ δὲ τὴν ἐνέργειαν,
κόσμου σύστασις· θεοῦ καταλλαγή· δα
κρύων μήτηρ· καὶ πάλιν θυγάτηρ· ἁμαρ
τημάτων ἱλασμός· πειρασμῶν γέφυ
ρα· θλίψεων μεσότοιχον· πολέ
μων θραῦσις· ἀγγέλων ἔργον· ἀ

μακαρίας προσευχῆς:·

33 | *The Heavenly Ladder* (in Greek)

Saint John Climacus (before 579–ca. 650)

Twelfth century

Tempera and gold on parchment

Book: 18.7 × 15.6 × 10.5 cm (7⅜ × 6⅛ × 4⅛ in.)

CONDITION
Full red-morocco, blind-tooled leather over wooden boards with grooved edges and five large, silver, rounded bosses extant on each board. Painted designs on edges of textblock. Braided leather clasp hasps extant (lower with breaks). Greek-style worked endbands of metallic thread extant but broken, repaired in 2006. Sewing structure broken and lower board detached and quires loose (repaired). Scattered flake losses throughout textblock, particularly in areas of blue and green in border designs and in illuminations where pigments have been painted over gilding.

The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai, Egypt (Sinai cod. 418)

ACCORDING TO HIS BIOGRAPHER, the author of *The Heavenly Ladder*, Saint John Climacus, was born around 579 and arrived in the Sinai at age sixteen to become a monk.[1] After forty years as a desert hermit, he was made the abbot of the Sinai monastery. A popular text in the Middle Ages, John Climacus's treatise on monastic virtues was translated into Latin and the several languages of Eastern Christianity.[2] Although directed to a monastic audience, the laity also appreciated its teachings, and two illustrated manuscripts were copied for prominent aristocrats, including the brother of Emperor Michael VII.[3]

Most decorated manuscripts of this text contain only a portrait of the author and an image of the heavenly ladder, similar to the Sinai icon of this subject shown herein (see cat. no. 48). A Vatican manuscript (Vat. cod. gr. 394)[4] of the late eleventh century and the present Sinai Codex illustrate each chapter separately. The allegorical illumination in the Vatican manuscript is more extensive, yet comparatively formulaic; that of the Sinai Codex is more direct, if sometimes elusive. The miniatures for chapter 8, on placidity and meekness, exemplify the approach taken (see below). Instead of personifying these abstract qualities in the manner of the Vatican Codex,[5] the Sinai manuscript depicts a virtuous monk seated and reading from a book on a lectern, equipped with a small hanging lamp for nocturnal vigils.[6] Other illustrations similarly refer to daily monastic life to ground the text in the lived experiences of its intended audience (see ills. on pages 206–7 and figs. 17, 18, and 20).[7]

33 (opposite), monks praying and reading, fol. 269r

33 (right), "On Placidity and Meekness," monk reading from lectern equipped with lamp for vigils, fol. 113v

Instead of an allegory of prayer, as in the Vatican version, the Sinai manuscript (see ill. on page 204) shows monks praying in a church, complete with ciborium over the altar, two templon icons of the Virgin and Christ, and a lector standing and reading from a book on a lectern to members of a monastic community who are in various attitudes of prayer.[8] With hands uplifted, two monks look toward the icons on the chancel screen and demonstrate praying with icons. Prayer, according to John Climacus, is "a dialogue and a union with God."[9] That dialogue with the divine is depicted or inscribed on several icons reproduced herein (see, for example, cat. nos. 2, 10, 25, 26, 53).

RSN

33. frontispiece and exchange of letters between John Climacus and John of Raithu, fol. 2r

NOTES

1. A recent study is Chryssavgis 2004. Also see Alexander Kazhdan and Robert S. Nelson in *ODB*, s.v. "John Klimax"; Luibheid and Russell 1982.
2. Kallistos Ware in Luibheid and Russell 1982, pp. 67–68.
3. Alexander Kazhdan and Robert S. Nelson in *ODB*, s.v. "John Klimax," p. 1061; Anderson 1979.
4. Martin 1954, figs. 67–132.
5. Martin 1954, fig. 99.
6. Martin 1954, fig. 188.
7. See Robert S. Nelson, "Where God Walked and Monks Pray," herein, figs. 16–17, 19.
8. The miniature has often been evoked in discussions of the *templon* or chancel barrier—for example, in Peers 2004, p. 112 (with bibliog).
9. *PG*, vol. 88, col. 1129; Luibheid and Russell 1982, p. 274

REFERENCES
Martin 1954, pp. 87–104, Weitzmann and Galavaris 1990, pp. 153–62.

33. "On Gluttony," fol. 135v

33. "On Solitude," fol. 254r

33. "Homily to the Pastor," John Climacus teaching with icons of the Deesis above, fol. 209r

33. "On Slander," fol. 124v